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I N Q U I R Y
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M O R A L , A N D P O L I T I C A L T E N D E N C Y
O F
T H E R E L I G I O N
C A L L E D
R O M A N C A T H O L I C .

A Roman Catholic Religion

Il y a des erreurs qu'il faut réfuter sérieusement, des absurdités
dont il faut rire, & des faussetés qu'il faut repousser avec
force.

VOLTAIRE.

D U B L I N :

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MORALS AND POLITICAL TENDENCY

THE RELIGION



ROMAN

It is the duty of every citizen to be acquainted with the principles of the religion of his country, and to be able to defend it against the attacks of infidelity and immorality.

Printed by J. Smith, No. 12, Great Street, Dublin.

1825

DUBLIN

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C O N T E N T S.

	Page.
<i>INTRODUCTION</i> —	1
<i>Repentance</i> — —	3
<i>Idolatry and Superstition</i> — —	27
<i>Ignorance</i> — —	35
<i>Doctrine of Exclusive Salvation</i> —	45
<i>Persecution</i> — —	50
<i>Faithlessness of Papists to such as dissent from them in Religion</i> — —	60
<i>Acknowledgment of a foreign Dominion</i>	71
<i>Ambitious and enterprising Spirit of the Clergy</i>	81
<i>Lofty Ideas and arbitrary Doctrines of Roman Catholics on the Subject of Government</i>	94
<i>Disloyalty of Catholic Subjects, and Disaffection to a Protestant Government</i> —	107
<i>Conclusion</i> — — —	120

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION
3	Report of the
27	History and Description
35	General
45	Doctrine of Exemption
50	Position
60	Principles of Religion
71	Acknowledgment of a foreign Dominion
81	Animism and contemporary spirit of the Church
94	Legislation and administrative Division of the State
94	Charters on the subject of Government
107	Diversity of Custom, Law, and Religion
107	to a Protestant Government
120	Conclusion



tical and religious principles, and to trace the influence of both on their conduct as members of society. The result of this examination is now to be presented to the public, with all that respect which is due to its awful decisions; but not without that confidence which enhances truth, or at least the love of it, is wanted to inspire. The interests of justice, as well as of truth, are here equally concerned; the subject is therefore both important and interesting. He who to his beliefs every tale forged by calumny against the papists, like the violation, and all of the many. Clearly it is here connected with error, mistake may be committed without injury, and propagated without contumacious contumacious; but where the country and tranquillity of society are concerned, it is a different matter.

INQUIRY

into the

MORAL AND POLITICAL TENDENCY

OF THE

RELIGION CALLED ROMAN CATHOLIC.

does not see that practice and justice error and toleration are almost equally reprehensible and equally mischievous? Truth and candour, then,

Il y a des erreurs qu'il faut éviter, mais pas des abus, dont il faut être, et des fautes qu'il faut éprouver avec force. Voltaire.

from the partial misrepresentations of their avowed enemies. I am allured, may be known, by their genuine and undigested principles. These

THE author of the following pages was led to the subject treated in them, by considerations extremely natural and obvious. When he beheld a numerous portion of fellow-subjects deprived of the enjoyment, not only of their religious, but also of their civil rights, and suffering every degree of discouragement which the imposition of fines and exclusion from office can create, he was anxious, as might be expected, to become acquainted with the true character of this execrated people, and, with this view, was eager to examine their political

tical and religious principles, and to trace the influence of both on their conduct, as members of society. The result of this examination is now offered to the public, with all that respect which is due to its awful decisions; but not without that confidence which either conscious truth, or at least the love of it, is wont to inspire. The interests of justice, as well as of truth, are here equally concerned: the subject is therefore both important and interesting. He who fondly believes every tale forged by calumny against the Papists, risks the violation, not only of truth, but also of humanity. Cruelty is here connected with error, and prejudice with injustice. In other cases, a mistake may be committed without injury, and propagated without any pernicious consequence; but, where the security and tranquillity of many thousands of fellow-creatures are involved, who does not see that prejudice and malice, error and resentment, are almost equally reprehensible, and equally mischievous? Truth and candour, therefore, direct all, who have any value for either, to form their judgment concerning the political and moral character of Roman Catholics, not from the partial misrepresentations of their avowed enemies, but from an attentive view of their genuine and undisguised principles. These, I am assured, may be known with far less difficulty, than those of the established church. Is it not then astonishing, that any one should attempt to learn the tenets of Papists, from the suspicious information of angry polemics, when they may be viewed and reviewed in records of undoubted originality? What is this, but to prefer uncertainty to evidence, and doubt to demonstration.

It may be, that with some, I shall incur the censure of immoderate presumptuousness, as well as of high irreverence towards them who have long

long since discussed the present subject; as if their discussion of it were incomplete and unsatisfactory, or as if it were reserved for my sagacity to find out what the acuteness of Chillingworth, the ingenuity of Tillotson, or the depth of Stillingfleet, could not discover. For such officious inferences I am not concerned; and shall only observe, that, whatever may be the merit of either of the abovenamed or other writers, who have gone over the same ground, it would be paying them a very extraordinary, and, I may add, a very unmerited compliment, to suppose them to have written on the subject of Popery, in such a manner, that nothing more remains to be said concerning it. If there be any who entertain so exalted a notion of these writers, I will not to diminish their veneration, or their gratitude; yet I cannot help thinking, that whoever considers the progress of science and philosophy, the abatement of religious animosities, the general prevalence of toleration, and the happy influence of all these on the human character, will be inclined to believe, that, with these advantages, we are at this day more competent to decide on the genius of the Roman Catholic religion, than our reverend and right reverend forefathers were, above a century ago. Of late, moreover, the wall of separation erected between Protestants and Roman Catholics, by the intolerant jealousy of former governments, has gradually decayed and crumbled into ruin, at least as far as it prevented their friendly intercourse and social connections.

Te si resurgat murtus abentus;

Te perent!

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No

No longer alarmed by the mutual dread of each other, Protestants and Catholics associate together more freely and frequently than formerly: a circumstance not more favourable to an acquaintance with the general character of the latter, than to that liberality of sentiment and universal benevolence which distinguish the present age. The Papist is no longer that frightful object which was wont to excite the horror and detestation of Protestants. Pity has succeeded to aversion, and contempt to indignation; while he is now esteemed rather absurd than wicked, and an enemy of sense and reason, rather than of society and good neighbourhood. I hope, indeed, it will appear, in the course of this inquiry, that a Papist, as such, is neither absurd nor contemptible, nor more a foe to good sense than to the constitution: yet, I am sorry to say, this is the light in which he is viewed, if not by the best-informed, at least by the greater part of this nation.

The vanity of enlisting under the standard of popular opinion, and the dread of encountering vulgar prejudices, have too often and too powerfully influenced writers, otherwise well qualified to yield support, and do honour to the cause of truth. These, when engaged in subjects of a delicate and critical nature, are too apt to resign their strength through fear of opposition. They want that courage which should enable them to brave the scorn of multitudes, and that magnanimity which looks down with contempt on such as prefer an indolent acquiescence in popular opinions, to the manly exercise of their own reason. Were I disposed to solicit the undiscerning favour of the multitude to these pages, it would be easy to secure it, by only gratifying them with assertions without proofs, invectives without moderation, and declamations without argument. The repetition of popish massacres
and

and popish treasons; of the cruelty of Mary, and the tyranny of James; of princes dethroned by popes, and of popes aspiring to the dominion of the world; would be far more acceptable and far more interesting to many, than a calm, dispassionate inquiry into the *causes* of the above-mentioned facts, and into their connexion with the avowed principles of Roman Catholics. The latter, however, is the purport of this pamphlet, in which, from a view of their religious and political tenets, as well as from other collateral evidences, I shall attempt to determine, in what light the Roman Catholics of these kingdoms ought to be considered by their Protestant fellow-subjects.

To him who undertakes to discuss any of the questions controverted between Protestants and Roman Catholics, it is a most discouraging thought, that, if he shew any disposition to moderation, or, to speak more properly, if he do not divest himself of every sentiment of moderation towards the latter, he cannot fail of drawing upon himself all the bitterness of blind zeal and illiberal prejudice. Whence so universal and so violent a prepossession hath arisen against a party neither considerable for its property, nor formidable in point of number, it is not easy to imagine. The sources of private prejudice are indeed numerous and complicated, and may be traced through all the workings of jealousy, hatred, fear, ambition, and avarice: but national prejudice is founded, generally, either in fear, or in the conflict of rival and incompatible interests. From the number of Catholics in England, nothing can be feared; and their pursuit of an interest opposite to that of the nation, appears still more idle and imaginary.* What, there-

* I have reason to believe, that from the reign of Mary till the Revolution, the body of Roman Catholics never sought that protection,

therefore, is the cause of that most inveterate of all our national prejudices; I mean, that against the Papists; a prejudice which subsisted in the reign of Elizabeth, and which, after the lapse of two centuries, has not been extinguished? Perhaps we are to look for a solution of this problem, not in the consequences of a *particular fact* or event, but in a *combination of different circumstances*, which, by their collected efficacy, have concurred to produce the effect of which we are speaking.

When Henry and Edward attempted to transfer into the treasury the riches of the ancient church, and to decorate the throne with the spoils of the altar, no measure could so effectually engage the passions of men on the side of Government, or reconcile them to that violence which was employed by the Court against the devoted Papists, as malicious invective, and impudent misrepresentation. Accordingly, no art, however base and disingenuous, was omitted, which might serve to turn the whole tide of popular odium against the professors of the ancient faith. Time, ever friendly to historical truth, has now unveiled that mystery of iniquity; and we see, with equal astonishment and indignation, how many impostures and how many fictions were maliciously invented and industriously circulated, concerning the abuses and scandals of the monastic orders, that these might appear to have drawn upon themselves all the rigours inflicted

tection, from any foreign power, which their own country denied them. From the latter period till 18 Geo. III. Roman Catholics, by refusing the oath of allegiance, justified the suspicion of their disaffection to the government; though their refusal of the oath was in consequence of their political, not of their religious opinions. Their address to the King, in 1778, shewed, as Mr. Burke observed, that they had cast off all foreign views and connexions, and that they looked for a redress of grievances at the hands only of their own natural government.

by

by government. The ingenious rapacity of Cromwell and Somerset could devise no more successful method of attaining its object, than by veiling their infamous passion under the cover of extirpating papal tyranny and superstition. The same causes which had operated so much to the disadvantage of Roman Catholics under Henry and Edward, all continued to sink the interest of that party even lower, under Elizabeth. The ambition of ecclesiastical supremacy, the prospect of great revenge against her most formidable enemy, the Pope, and the necessity of establishing her title to the crown on the most solid foundations all determined her to proscribè a religion which she had lately sworn to protect, and to act with vigour against them who professed it. Indeed, from one whose ideas of sincerity could allow her, after promising to maintain the Catholic worship, to denounce against it the most sanguinary edicts; and whose ideas of justice could permit her to arraign, in judgment, an independent sovereign; and, in contempt of the rights of hospitality, and of the ties of blood, to bring her to the scaffold;—from such a character the Papists could not expect any sudden change of principle, or any extraordinary effort of greater virtue in their favour. If these, however, were disposed to indulge that malignant joy which is sometimes felt at the view of the crimes and follies of an enemy, they might perhaps dwell with some pleasure on the reflection, that the most cruel of their persecutors was the murderer of Mary, and that her ministers were they who were her accomplices in that deed of blood.

Thus, from the first change of religion in this country, till the reign of James, we may observe that the popular prejudice against Popery was connected with political causes, which, as they were founded on the artful and interested views of a party,

party, could not afford just grounds for so universal a prepossession against Roman Catholics.

After the rapaciousness of Henry and the two Regents under Edward, had been gratified with the last exhausted remains of monastic wealth, and when the views of Elizabeth and her ministers, in encouraging the popular cry against Popery, had been completely successful, and the power of the latter was so far reduced as to be no longer formidable, it might have been expected that the violence of the national prejudice would have either dropped or abated: but unfortunately, the evil which originated in Henry's avarice, and which subsisted afterwards through the aid of a fraudulent and cruel policy, was now farther aggravated by the furious clamour of fanaticism.

The restless and uncontrollable spirit of Puritanism, ever impatient of civil as well as of ecclesiastical subjection, had borne with extreme reluctance the restraint which Elizabeth had laid upon it by some very severe penal statutes. The great freedom assumed by the Puritans, in their political speculations and in their ideas of civil liberty could not but be particularly obnoxious to sovereigns so jealous of their prerogative as were Elizabeth and James. Though new, their sentiments were not unpopular; and, as their animosity to Papists was the most determined and implacable, by this circumstance they recommended themselves, not only to the people at large, but also to some of the leading ministers of Elizabeth, by whom they were countenanced. In the reign of James, the Puritans had gained a very visible ascendant in the nation; and were possessed of a very considerable interest in the House of Commons. As their views were no other than the subversion of the ancient constitution, and of the established church, in order that their operations against both might be at once more secret and successful, they pretended their opposition

opposition was directed only against Popery. Partiality to the Papists, and an indifference about the Progress of their religion were the continual subjects of their complaints and remonstrances. Neither the vigorous war of controversy maintained by the established clergy against the popish divines, could clear the church, nor could the sanguinary laws ever in force, and frequently executed, by any means exempt the government, from a suspicion of being favourable to that body. When we consider the probable effects of so loud and unceasing a clamour, raised by a numerous and powerful party against the Papists ; also, when we reflect that the antipathy of the nation to that hated people must have increased with time, and have gained strength from its long continuance, we cannot wonder if it was kept up without abatement or diminution through the reigns of the Stewarts. In the reign of Charles II. when the nation had before it the prospect of Popery seated on the throne, its terrors we may imagine were extreme. What Cecil had been in the days of Elizabeth, that now was the Earl of Shaftesbury. Conspiracies and massacres were again forged and believed. The fire of London, the disgrace at Chatham, with every public disaster, all were laid to the account of the devoted Papists. In short James II. ascended the throne ; and inheriting all the exalted notions of his father and grandfather, concerning the unlimited prerogative of kingly power, he deserved to lose at once the confidence and allegiance of his subjects. If only the personal character of that Prince had suffered from the arbitrary and impolitic measures of his government all had been well : but by a sophistry which attends all the passions, especially those into which the populace enter, it was discovered that his religion had made him a tyrant, and a subverter of the constitution. At a time when Newton and Locke were busy in dissipating antiquated

errors

errors and prejudices, the people of this nation were so far the dupes of both, as to believe a Papist only could be guilty of attempting what every Protestant Prince, since the reformation, had either executed or aimed at; I mean, to raise prerogative on the ruins of liberty. This however is not a place to refute, either by argument or ridicule, that highest extravagance, that absurdest instance of the vulgar prejudice against Popery: only let it be remembered, that, if James II. violated the constitution, he wanted not the precedent of his Protestant predecessors; and that among the obligations which Popery may impose on a King of Great Britain, it will never be one, that he shall sacrifice the peace and liberty of his people to a misguided zeal for his own religion.

If we now take a retrospect of the different causes which have at different periods contributed to prepossess the nation against Papists, it will be impossible not to observe that this prepossession is founded on no just and sufficient motive; but that, as it began from the lust of ecclesiastical power and ecclesiastical plunder, so it was propagated by ministerial intrigue, and continued by the dark insidious policy of a fanatical party. And if to these causes we add the absurd error and injustice of attributing to the influence of his religious persuasion the unconstitutional conduct of James II. I sincerely believe, we shall have discovered the true and real grounds of that general antipathy to Popery, which has subsisted from the first change of religion in this Island, down to the present time. It may indeed, and probably will, be said, that however susceptible the minds of individuals may be of prejudice, yet whole nations are not hastily to be charged with it; and therefore that the settled animosity of this country against Popery is rather a proof of guilt in the Papists, than an instance of groundless prejudice in the English

English nation. It is indeed evident, that individuals are more likely to be prejudiced than a great and enlightened people, yet neither our own reason, nor the history of mankind, will, I believe, allow us to maintain that the latter is incapable of receiving impressions founded on prejudice. Now, whether to attribute the popular odium against Papists to *prejudice*, after the foregoing account of its origin and progress, be a *hasty* accusation, is what is submitted to the judgment of the unbiassed reader. That account, it cannot be denied, has been given from incontestable facts of history. And, if to the above observations be added an inquiry into the nature and spirit of the religion professed by Roman Catholics, it will, I think, appear sufficiently evident, that prejudice, more than truth, has determined us to form an opinion so unfavourable concerning that body. Justice, as well as humanity, forbids us to condemn the persons, and execrate the principles of our fellow-subjects, without knowing the character of the former, or the tendency of the latter. What therefore is the point of view in which the Roman Catholic religion is to be considered; and what are the sources from which information may be derived, that a true judgment may be formed of its genuine character?

He who enters on this enquiry must, for information, consult the writings and belief of Roman Catholics; and, having ascertained their doctrines, must then observe, whether these bear a favourable or unfavourable aspect to morality and government. Morality is the foundation of human society; and political greatness, to be permanent, must be raised on the basis of public virtue. If therefore the religion of Papists be found to be contradictory, either directly or in its consequences, to any moral principle, it is sufficient to justify every legal discouragement employed

employed against it; but if it appear to be equally favourable with other persuasions, and equally friendly to good morals, then may it claim an equal degree of favor and countenance from the magistrate. Roman Catholics, being professors of Christianity, cannot, consistently with this profession, avow any other moral doctrines than such as are founded on natural and revealed religion. The Scripture they receive as the word of God; and the law of nature they believe to be a rule of action unalterable and indispensable. Conscience also, the great interpreter of the natural law, they admit as a rule by which we are to judge of the good or bad quality of our actions. In short, if their public profession, or public practice, be allowed to have any weight, I know no principle *merely moral*, in which they do not agree with the established church of England. It is not however to be denied, that the common principles of morality may be so far weakened and deformed by the doctrines of a pretended revelation, as in a great measure to render them void of all efficacy and influence on the mind. The point therefore to be examined seems precisely this: "Are there not certain religious practices observed by Roman Catholics, and also certain dogmas believed by them, which, though they are pretended to be conformable either to a written or traditional revelation, are justly suspected of an immoral tendency?" This I conceive to be an accurate statement of the question concerning those immoral doctrines and practices with which the Papists have been reproached, both by politicians and polemics, during the last two hundred years. The charge is denied. Let us now see how it is refuted.

Among

Among the various points of Roman Catholic belief, none seems to be, in a *Repentance* moral view, more important than the doctrine of *repentance*. Whether we consider with the eye of reason and philosophy the melancholy consequences of guilt in this life, its opposition to the laws, its dread of the penal sanctions of those laws, its external infamy and inward remorse; or whether, by the light of religion, we contemplate its more terrible effects relatively to a future state; that cannot but be a most interesting doctrine, by which men are taught how they may avoid these evils, and how they may regain the lost favour of their Creator. That repentance is the general condition on which these benefits may be obtained, is affirmed by all Christians with great unanimity; but in explaining the nature and extent of this condition, they fall into their usual discordancy. The church of England, with many other reformed churches, requires from the repenting sinner, that he be sorry for his past transgressions, that he renounce his evil ways, and that he conceive a firm resolution of future amendment. All this the Church of Rome also requires, and even more; she enjoins a verbal declaration of all his sins to be made to one of her ministers; nor does she then encourage him to hope for pardon, till he appear willing to expiate them by a voluntary sufferance of penitential austerities.

Notwithstanding this greater appearance of rigour in the Romish discipline of penance, I know not how it has been universally believed by Protestants, that the tenets of the Roman Catholics, concerning the terms of acceptance, are of so accommodating and indulgent a nature, as to yield no small degree of encouragement to vice. "In other articles, it has been said, the doctrines of Popery are harmlessly absurd, calculated to shock the understanding, rather than
"pervert

“ pervert the heart : but relatively to this, it is
 “ otherwise. In effect, whatever tends to miti-
 “ gate the salutary terrors of heavenly justice,
 “ to abate the awfulness of its threatening denun-
 “ ciations, or to flatter vice with a prospect of
 “ pardon approaching to impunity, cannot but
 “ be favourable to immorality. The villain
 “ who is guilty of injustice and murder, may, by
 “ counterfeiting sorrow, and accusing himself of
 “ his sins to a priest, after a short interview, be
 “ pronounced free from the bonds of iniquity,
 “ and restored to the favour of Heaven. Now,
 “ to what end does Religion denounce vengeance
 “ against the libertine and the profligate, if, at
 “ the same time, she counteract the impressions
 “ of fear, by an assurance of reconciliation on
 “ such easy terms?—Surely the dread of her me-
 “ naces will be very feebly impressed on the
 “ minds of those who believe that, by confessing
 “ themselves sinners, they shall escape punish-
 “ ment. The Popish doctrine of repentance,
 “ therefore, is highly pernicious, on account of
 “ its indirect tendency to relax the morals of
 “ men, by flattering them with the promise of
 “ easy forgiveness. Nor is this all;—the very
 “ practice itself, of *confession*, considered as to its
 “ immediate and most obvious effects, is such
 “ as will alarm the principles of every moral and
 “ conscientious man. In this sacred tribunal,
 “ as it is called, the most abominable and most
 “ infamous of the passions is inflamed by oppor-
 “ tunity, and encouraged by secrecy. Here eve-
 “ ry religious and moral restraint may be bro-
 “ ken through, by those who are alike secure
 “ from the blush of modesty and the confusion
 “ of discovery. In these pious colloquies, where
 “ every subject of possible criminality is discussed
 “ between the parties with all the accuracy of
 “ minute detail, how can delicacy or purity of
 “ manners be preserved, while the memory is
 “ employed

“employed to recollect, the imagination to paint, and the tongue to relate, the most humiliating weaknesses of our nature?”

Notwithstanding this impassioned declamation, the effect of prejudice, as often as of conviction, to me it has always appeared surprising, that the Roman Catholic doctrine of repentance should be thought, by any who are acquainted with it, too relaxed, or in the smallest degree formidable to the interests of morality. The arguments of polemics are commonly plausible; but here we are shocked by glaring improbability. With as much truth it might be affirmed of the English constitution, that it is unfavourable to political liberty. Indeed it may be, and has been said of the latter, that it encourages opposition to government, affords protection to licentiousness, and confines within too narrow limits the power of the sovereign. But, that it is hostile to liberty, who will dare to say? Also that, in their notions of penance, Roman Catholics are rigorous without reason, and cruel without necessity, in short, that they are the dupes of a barbarous, unrelenting superstition; all this has been said a thousand times; and to prove it, both the practices of many, and the common doctrines of all Roman Catholics, have been brought forward; but that they are too loose and too indulgent in the doctrine of penance, is a calumny which only malice could affirm, and only ignorance believe. For my part, the character of the penitential discipline now in force among Roman Catholics, seems to me to be rigour and severity, rather than laxity or indulgence. When the sinner thinks of returning to the path of duty and obedience to his Maker, and for that purpose resolves to do penance for past transgressions, he is taught, not to counterfeit sorrow; but, by weighing the motives that induce him to a love of God, and a detestation of his former conduct,

to conceive an unfeigned and heart-felt sorrow for past offences, and a resolution of amending his future life. After recollecting his sins in the bitterness of his soul, he is admonished to make a verbal declaration of them to the ministers of the church, and to await their sentence; thus submitting to an institution of the most humiliating nature; an institution which confounds the pride, and affronts the shame of every individual, from the prince and the pontif, down to the last and lowest member of the Catholic church. That such are the regulations with regard to all penitents, without distinction, in the Church of Rome, is evident from every authority that can be desired by the most suspicious or the most incredulous. In what, therefore, consists the encouragement which it is pretended the Romish doctrine of repentance affords to vice? Is it that, besides faith in Christ, besides sorrow for sin, and a resolution of reforming his future life, which the Catholic requires in common with the established church, he also exacts from himself, a disposition to submit to the afflictions of Providence, and also to the austerities enjoined by his profession, with a view to atone for past irregularities? But it is idle to attempt any further comparison. When men begin to be truly afraid of a religion too easy and too complaisant, it will, I believe, be determined without much difficulty, whether the Romish or established religion be most indulgent.

With regard to the danger supposed to arise from the secrecy of confession, it seems totally imaginary. To believe that secrecy is always connected with crime; that the opportunity, when offered, of doing wrong, is always eagerly seized; and that Papists are ever ready to rush into wickedness, when they are unnoticed by the public eye; is the effect of something worse than illiberal prejudice:—it is downright misanthropy. The priest

priest and penitent meet together on business of a most serious and weighty nature; the one being about to receive, the other to administer a rite which both are taught to believe is of divine institution. Now, impressed with these awful sentiments, can they be conceived to have any other view than of complying with an ordinance designed by its author to make them both better men and better Christians. Surely, when such are the ideas in general of confession, and such in general the views of them that make use of it, he who can suspect any evil consequence from this practice, must be under the influence of motives not the most honourable to human nature.

If it be alleged that self-accusation of the criminal in this tribunal tends to deprave the minds of men by rendering them callous to shame, and to that apprehension of disgrace from discovery, which is so great a restraint on vicious actions, and consequently, that it occasions an insensibility not only to the impressions of shame, but also to the horror of vice itself—I answer, that if indeed confession of sins were allowed to be made in such a manner as to resemble a bare narration of facts, or an uninteresting detail of transgressions, unaccompanied with any signs of present sorrow, or purposes of future amendment; then might it be feared, lest this humiliating ceremony might so far familiarise men with guilt, as to divest them of all sentiment of shame or remorse. But when it is considered that the confession of a sinner is or ought always to be, made with a sense of sorrow and of shame for the offences he has committed, and that he is taught on no other terms to expect the benefit of the sacrament, surely every scruple of the most exact moralist must be quieted by these considerations.

Whether the Romish Practice of confession be of divine appointment, or of human institution; also, whether this practice and the necessity of it,

were known to antiquity; are inquiries foreign to the design of these pages: upon which, as well as upon other topics of controversy, I doubt not but the polemics of the two last centuries have alleged every thing which acute reasoning, joined to extensive erudition, could suggest to prove the conformity or opposition of the Romish discipline to the doctrine of Revelation. From these disquisitions I wholly abstract, only solicitous to inquire, on the principles of impartial reason and common sense, into the moral or immoral tendency of the practice of confession. To him who allows the matter a moment's consideration, it will appear, that by disclosing to a minister of religion the state of his conscience, a man may obtain, with singular advantage, every aid which that religion affords, either to impress him more forcibly with the hopes and fears of another world, to administer comfort to him in distress, or to inculcate and explain to him, in their full extent, his particular and personal duties. Confession is a kind of private instruction in which the priest does not, as in the pulpit, dwell upon general topics of censure or exhortation: but, adapting his advice to the individual capacity and circumstances of his Penitent, he discovers to him the sources of his irregularities, and prescribes to him proper remedies against them, and, while he endeavours to correct the depravity of his heart, he enlightens the understanding with the knowledge of those duties which concern him both as a citizen and a christian: for in the Romish church, it may be observed, no one is admitted to a participation of the sacraments, who is not well instructed in the principal mysteries of christian belief, and in the obligations of christian morality. Hence it appears, that confession greatly facilitates the acquirement of religious instruction, and may therefore be said to promote all those beneficial effects which flow from it.

And

And this advantage of the practice, I think, far outweighs the evils pretended to arise from it; evils that subsist more in imagination than in reality, and that are the effects of wild and malignant conjecture, rather than of just observation or experience.

These remarks in favour of confession, will not be attributed to any undue partiality to Popery, by those who know that many truly orthodox sons of the Church of England have expressed themselves on the subject at least with moderation, if not with approbation of the practice. I recollect the names of several prelates of the established church, of whom some have lamented the disuse, others have desired the re-establishment of confession. A learned Prelate* and distinguished preacher, on the present bench, whose writings discover more eloquence than liberality of sentiment, grants, though with apparent reluctance, that in many cases a confession of sins to the minister may be useful, and sometimes necessary. Also many foreign divines of the Reformation, have entertained sentiments not less favourable concerning this point of Catholic discipline. From these concessions of his adversaries, concessions extorted by evidence, not yielded through complaisance, a Roman Catholic will be justified in deducing at least this conclusion, that the practice of confession, whatever be said of its origin or necessity, is contrary to no principle of moral duty. With what shadow of reason therefore has the reproach of immoral laxity been fixed on the

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Popish

* This Prelate, eager to signalize his prowess in the field of controversy, published, in 1782, the substance of Archbishop Secker's five sermons against Popery. His Lordship's courage and conduct on this occasion, remind us of one of Homer's heroes, who directed his attack on the Trojans, "secure behind the Telamonian shield."

Αὐτὸς ἐπίσθ' ἰδὼν, ὡς αἰεὶ ἰδὼν πολεῖται, θυμῷ
 ἔκ' Ἀλκίῳ. ὁ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸν ἀντιλατρεῖται.

ILLIAD, B. V. 271, 2.

Popish system? or whence could a representation so unjust of its doctrine of repentance originate? Was it that the authors of it suffered themselves to be misled by the mere sound, without comprehending the meaning of a Popish *INDULGENCE*? or that, by a finesse not uncommon in controversy, they availed themselves of the ambiguity of a theological term, to mistake the belief of those by whom it was used? This leads us naturally to a discussion of the Romish doctrine of *indulgences*.

On no other occasion has the clamour against the superstitions of Popery been either louder or more frequent than on this subject. It would seem, that the adversaries of that persuasion, conceiving this to be the most vulnerable part of the popish system, have directed against it the whole force of their opposition. And indeed it must be confessed, that, of all the abuses which, during an establishment of many centuries, it was impossible should not have crept into the Church of Rome, as well as into any other society equally ancient and diffusive, those which were committed on occasion of indulgences were the most enormous. Instigated by avarice, the basest of the passions, and unawed by a sense of decorum, the *pardoners* blushed not to practice the most barefaced and violent rapacity, and to offer the most daring insults to society and religion. Anxious only to enrich themselves, they were little scrupulous about the means; and too often made indulgences a mere pretext for defrauding the unsuspecting and industrious. The acts of almost every Council, both general and particular, for two hundred years before the Reformation, abound with complaints of the pious frauds with which these impostors continually abused the unguarded simplicity and ignorance of the people: and it is to me astonishing, that the measure adopted by the Council of Trent, of an entire suppression of them, should not have occurred

red long before, as the only effectual method of silencing the loud cry of the public against such flagrant enormities. But on this occasion we may observe the general defect of religious establishments. When those abuses have once crept into them, which will inevitably attend every government and every institution administered by men, the want of that quick discernment of faults, which is oftener found in enemies than in friends, prevents many disorders from being rectified, many abuses from being reformed, and many spirited, yet salutary, measures from being carried into execution. On the other hand, the dread of censure from those who are known to be interested in finding matter for it, has been frequently preventive of crimes and follies, which would have been rather countenanced than discouraged by the unalarmed security and undisturbed repose of an *establishment*. But to return to indulgences; it is allowed that the venality and prostitution of them had become so notoriously infamous, that at last the clamour of both clergy and laity was unanimous against the authors. But what then? Is it only indulgences that have been abused? or must the declaimers against popery be gratified with an exception from the usual rules of reasoning, and be permitted, from the accidental abuse of indulgences, to infer their absolute impropriety and evil tendency? Small indeed must be our experience in life, and very slender our knowledge of mankind, if from them we have not learnt, that all men, of every denomination, are alike susceptible of the love of money. The sacred writings inform us, that in the family of Samuel, a most holy prophet, and even in the number of the twelve Apostles, avarice had its votaries; and yet we are to wonder how a body of men, who were, it may be presumed, neither prophets nor apostles, could be guilty of avarice and rapaciousness! It is however but justice to observe,

observe, though I know none of our writers against the Papists who have had the candour to acknowledge it, that Roman Catholics have been as loud in condemning the conduct of the *pardoners*, as either the zealous Jortin, the declamatory Robertson, or the truly orthodox Porteus. What pretensions these authors have to the praise of candour, they have shewn by their careful omission of the above remark, though so obvious to one who was disposed to do justice to Roman Catholics; and also by their affecting to confound the unauthorized proceedings of the *pardoners*, with the general and confirmed usages of the Catholic body.

But it may be alleged, that the objections of Protestants against indulgences, are drawn, not only from the scandalous behaviour of the *pardoners*, but also from the very nature of indulgences themselves. What, therefore, is meant by an *indulgence*; a term which has for these two centuries drawn upon the Romish Church such accumulated reproach, and which, during that period, has excited her adversaries to employ against her all the violence of invective, and all the poignancy of ridicule? In the writings of these controversial declaimers, nothing appears to me more surprising, than that, to procure information on the subject of indulgences, they have rather had recourse to writers of their own, than of the Romish communion*. Certainly such conduct affords no very favourable idea of their candour, or even of their judgment: for if the popish doctrine of indulgences must be held out to the public as a work of blind superstition and priestly policy, and as an encouragement to immorality, surely the doctrine itself ought to be stated from works containing the avowed and genuine

* “ Il faudroit être bien simple pour croire qu'il suffit d'entendre
 “ les docteurs de son parti, pour s'instruire des raisons du parti
 “ contraire.” ROUSSEAU.

nuine dogmas of Popery : but this has not been done. The most favourable notion of an *indulgence*, to be found in Anti-papist writers, is, that it is "a forgiveness of sin, in consideration of the recital of certain prayers, the performance of alms-deeds, fasts, or other good works." But because it seemed not very repugnant to Scripture and antiquity, that the pardon of sins should be obtained by these means, the nature of an indulgence was to undergo a farther alteration, more fitted to raise a frown or smile, alternately, at the expence of the poor Papist. For this end it was to be represented as "a grant of pardon, for a certain sum, of sins unrepented of." In effect, this is the idea of an indulgence, which, however distorted and disfigured, has, with uniform malice and dissingenuity, been handed from Luther down to his modern panegyrist Dr. Robertson. A Protestant, I doubt not, will recognize the figure, with all its distortions; but no Catholic, I will venture to say, will allow it to have the faintest shade of likeness to the indulgence of which he has heard. That an indulgence should procure him the pardon of his sins, will be more than he has learnt before; that it is a commodity purchasable for a sum of money, will appear still more extraordinary; but that the benefit of an indulgence extends to unrepented crimes, is a paradox which will excite his pity or indignation: he will spurn away the calumny with becoming contempt, and, in the exasperated language of Ajax, will say of its author,

—— *Sic pugnât! Sic est metuendus Ulysses!*

Still should the question be urged, "What is meant by an indulgence?" I answer, that Catholics themselves are the most competent to fix the sense of a term, which they were the first to use. If a doubt arise concerning the doctrines of

of the first reformers, it is not their adversaries whom we consult, but the writings of the reformers themselves, and their followers. To the above query then, were it proposed, I believe a Roman Catholic would answer, that he understands by an indulgence* "a remission of that temporal punishment to which he conceives the sinner is subject, after his reconciliation with God, and after that the guilt of his sins hath been pardoned through repentance." An indulgence, therefore, supposes the distinction of a twofold punishment, temporal and eternal, incurred by sin; a distinction so essential in the Romish theology, that without it, neither the doctrines of purgatory, indulgences, nor of repentance, can be understood. Hence the only method of refuting the popish tenets above mentioned, is to shew, if it can be shewn, the vanity of this distinction. Petulant wit, and vehement declamation, when pointed at the pretended consequences of indulgences, may afford entertainment to the vulgar, to whom they are addressed, but will be received only with contempt by all who are competent judges of the argument.

But it is the moral and political aspect, and not the orthodox complexion of indulgences, which is here to be examined. An acute and ingenious writer has affirmed, that Protestants have no reason to apprehend the dissolution of morality or society from a popish indulgence†. The same author also observes, that the first reformers did
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* This representation of an indulgence is, I am sensible, the least favourable to Roman Catholics. None of that persuasion are obliged to believe the effect of an indulgence extends beyond the present life, or that it operates any farther than as a mitigation upon just causes, of canonical penances, enjoined by the pastors of the church to penitent sinners, according to their several degree of demerit. See a very accurate statement of *Roman Catholic principles*, published in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, Vol. LVII. Jan. Feb. March.

† Hume's History, Vol. IV. Note A.

as much injury to morality, by entirely abolishing purgatory, as the pardoners ever did by the sale of indulgences. Indeed if Popery be thought to encourage vice, by promising to the sinner an easy pardon of future punishment, does not Protestantism equally countenance guilt, by denying the reality of that punishment, and by calling the popish doctrine of purgatory * "a vain thing, " and fondly invented?" Should it be said, that the Protestant cannot but have the fear of God before his eyes, while he believes the existence of punishments both more terrible and more certain than those of a fabulous purgatory; I answer, that Roman Catholics also believe with equal firmness, and perhaps with greater unanimity, † that there is a hell, as well as a purgatory, and that no indulgence whatever can avail the spirits confined in that place of woe. How far the existence of purgatory is fabulous, and how far the doctrine of indulgences, built, as it is, upon the former, may be thought to lay a groundless and unnecessary restraint on the consciences of men, by threatening them with the imaginary terrors of an *intermediate state*, are inquiries in which I have no business, nor yet any inclination, to engage; and I dare say that the omission will be as much to the satisfaction of the reader as of myself. This however I shall observe, that the belief of

* Art. 22.

† Mons. D'Alembert affirmed, in the article *Geneva*, which he furnished for the *Encyclopédie*, that many of the Genevan divines did not believe a hell. The divines denied the charge; but the philosopher, instead of retracting, confirmed the accusation by a bold appeal to their writings and conversation, and also to the general persuasion of the people of Geneva. He adds, that a disbelief of this alarming article of Christianity is a necessary consequence of Protestant principles; and that it will sooner or later be avowed and taught in all churches of the Reformation. What truth there is in this prediction of the French philosopher, perhaps the divines of our own country can inform us. See Vol. VII. *Encyclopédie*, Art. *Geneva*, and Let. de Mons. D'Alembert à J. J. Rousseau, Vol. VI. *Oeuvres de Rousseau*, ed. 4to. p. 441.

purgatory, and of the use of indulgences, whatever be thought of its foundation in revelation, is perfectly harmless and inoffensive with regard to morality. Indeed, that these opinions should by the philosopher be ranked among superstitions, and that by the divine, I mean of our own country, they should be numbered with the corruptions of Popery, might be expected; but to represent them as hostile to virtue, and dangerous to society, would be ridiculous, were not the ridicule lost in injustice and defamation. Many writers on the continent, of acknowledged ingenuity and sagacity, have employed all their art to render the religion of the people at once odious and ridiculous; yet I recollect not one who has discovered in indulgences that immoral tendency, which has alarmed the apprehensions of our countrymen.

But notwithstanding these apprehensions, which have arisen from a view of the abuses rather than from a just notion of indulgences, I doubt not but to the candid and impartial it will readily occur, that few blessings, even the most valuable, have been enjoyed by men without having been abused. The abuse of a revelation has produced much evil; the abuse of kingly power caused the despotism of the Tudors, and all the calamities of the grand rebellion; and even that boast of Englishmen, the liberty of the press, has through abuse, degenerated into such licentiousness, that it is with many a problem still unresolved, whether it be more beneficial or prejudicial to the community. To shew therefore the bad effects of indulgences, relatively to public morals, it must be proved that they have a necessary tendency to promote vice, independently of all abuses. Such a tendency in them, Mr. Hume could not discover; and that Gentleman

man no one will suspect to have been influenced by a predilection for Popery*.

If we consult experience as well as reason on this head, we shall find that they who believe in the doctrine of indulgences are by no means behind their opponents in point of morality. It may indeed be an invidious as well as a hazardous undertaking, to adjust national pretensions to moral virtue: yet, I believe, that man will have nothing to apprehend from the charge of either partiality or presumption, who ventures to assert, that the morals of Roman Catholics are not worse than those of Protestants.

During the first phrenzy of the Reformation, while the violence of party was extreme, and the bitterness of religious animosity unabated, the reformers, as if it were in revenge for the opprobrious appellation of *heretics*, retorted on Papists the charge of idolatry, and declared the Head of Roman Catholic idolaters to be Antichrist†. This accusation, notwithstanding

*Idolatry and
Superstition.*

* The late author of *The Confessional*, utterly averse, as he was, to Popery, was not able to see those frightful consequences which so many of his brethren have apprehended from the Romish doctrine and discipline of penance. "I will not examine her [Papal Rome] on the head of purgatory, penances, &c. which have no immediate ill effect on civil society." Ed. 3. p. xcix.

† It is painful to reflect, that one of the politest scholars in this country should have attempted to revive the credit of this fanatical notion; an attempt which may be compared, for success as well as design, with that of Sir Isaac Newton to interpret the *Revelations*. See Dr. Hurd on the *Prophecies of the Christian Church*.

A learned Prelate and Professor at Cambridge affirms it to be "a primary pillar of the reformed faith, that the hierarchy of the Church of Rome is the Antichrist of St. John." It must be owned, that the charge of Antichristianism against the head of the Romish Church, has afforded no inconsiderable support to the cause of the reformed. This may be attributed, not so much to the evidence of the position, which affirms the Pope to be Antichrist, as to the fanaticism of that party which first assented to it. When the minds of men are violently agitated by the interest they take

notwithstanding the confidence with which it was urged at first, and the perseverance with which it was continued at different intervals, now seems to have dropped in great measure, and to have had the same end with every attack equally unfounded and unsupported. Indeed, * the Book of Homilies, and 30 Ch. II. † still express the language of antiquated prejudice; and still are suffered,

take in an important event, they believe without hesitation the most extravagant fictions, and embrace without remorse the most iniquitous measures. Evidence is not required; indeed, were it offered, distracted with the great views of party, men are then incapable of attending to it. This is the favourable moment for design and imposture. Then may the tale of absurdity be unfolded, when reason is set at defiance, and credulity is suffered to take possession of every mind. Such has been the state of the human mind in all violent revolutions of either church or state. Who then can wonder that, by the aid of such circumstances, by the misapplication of scripture texts, and the misinterpretation of scripture prophecies, Protestants were led to believe, that the head of Roman Catholics was the *little horn* of Daniel, the *man of sin* of St. Paul, and the *Antichrist* of St. John?

The learned Professor also gravely informs us, that "he has known the infidelity of more than one young man, happily removed by shewing him the characters of Popery delineated by St. Paul in his prophecy concerning the man of sin." At the commencement, and during the progress of the Rebellion, the clergy, by misapplying obscure texts of scripture, inflamed the passions of an enthusiastic audience against the King and Royalists: yet, does it follow that scripture was in reality on the side of the rebels? The happy impression, therefore, which his Lordship wrought on his young converts, by shewing them the characters of Popery delineated by St. Paul, is no proof that his Lordship's interpretation of the prophecy was just, or that the prediction of St. Paul was really fulfilled in the person of the Bishop of Rome. I wonder not, that more than one young man should have yielded to a bad argument. Some men require more, some less, evidence of the truth they are solicited to embrace; others, of a more pliant and unsettled creed, require no evidence whatever. It is for his Lordship to determine in which of these predicaments his converts are to be classed. For the honour however of Cambridge, I hope her Divinity Professor is master of better arguments against infidelity than that which he has produced above. See Collection of Theological Tracts, Vol. V. p. 7.

* Homily the second, on *peril of idolatry*.

† 30 Ch. II. c. 1.

suffered, doubtless to the honour of the pulpit and the bar, to mislead the ignorant and uninformed: yet these, like the ruins of our ancient abbies, are monuments of the past, rather than of the present belief. A *pious* foundation of the late Bishop of Gloucester has, within the last twenty years, called forth new supporters of the charge of Romish antichristianism and idolatry. These have been hired to illustrate, with their venal eloquence, arguments borrowed from the fiery Whitaker, and the visionary Mede. The Bishop's money has procured preachers; but it has not supplied any new powers of argument, or reflected any new light on a subject of infinite obscurity. The names of Bishop Montague, Bishop Parker, of Thorndike, and above all, of Grotius, will bear a great load of lectures and sermons in the other scale, before they can be entirely outweighed.

The first reformers being judged by their followers to be under the immediate direction of Heaven, the latter seized every occasion of extolling their *apostles*, as the instruments of Providence in bestowing its choicest favours on mankind. To them was ascribed the revival of learning, the diffusion of arts and sciences over Europe, with the invaluable privilege of free inquiry. Nor was this enough: they were even said to have rescued the Divinity itself from that state of humiliation, into which the idolatry of Rome had degraded it. It is beneath the dignity of reason to use argument in refuting a charge so destitute of all plausibility; a charge, which could only originate in malice, and subsist only by impudent falsehood or contemptible ignorance. However, Papists have had the satisfaction to see themselves vindicated from this foul aspersions, by the favourable testimony of Protestants themselves; and if it be honourable to be acquitted, on

on trial, by the unfeigned evidence of an adversary, Roman Catholics may boast of this singular honour. The idolatry of Roman Catholics consists either in their adoration of the sacrament, or in their veneration of the departed spirits of holy men. The latter is a mere quarrel about words; the former practice has been justified by several Protestants, high in the line of preferment, as well as of learning*. On what foundation, then, rests the cry of Romish idolatry? On the credit of those who were once interested in decrying Popery; on a mis-statement, either accidental or intentional, of Popish tenets; and on the natural propensity of men to believe the worst of a system, which they see discountenanced both by the religion and government of their country.

It must have appeared as improbable to be believed, as it was impossible to be known, by the founders of the Church of England, that the time would come, when the most insulting of all reproaches would be cast on an establishment, by them deemed the boast of human wisdom, and the glory of the Reformation: Idolatry was the principal plea, on which the first reformers justified their separation from Rome. That plea is now set up by the Unitarians against the Church of England: and to a Roman Catholic it must be entertaining, to see the necessity of a second reformation maintained by the same reasons which were formerly used to justify the first. In the sixteenth century, Protestants reproached Catholics with idolatry, for worshipping the Host: the same reproach is now made to the Protestant Church of this country, by the Unitarians,

* Bishop Andrews, in his Answer to Bellarmine, ch. viii. p. 194. Bishop Forbes, De Euchar. c. ii. § 9. De Dominis, Dean of Windsor, under King James I. Also Bishop Taylor, and Mr. Thorndike.

Unitarians, for worshipping the person of Christ.* The first reformers, to support their charge against Rome, appealed to scripture: Catholics, to refute it, appealed also. From scripture, which, since it was written, has never been found competent to decide a single controversy, both parties went to the Fathers, and both laid claim, yet not with equal confidence, to the favour of those ancient and venerable authorities. Similar to this has been the method of conducting a late controversy, in which the Church of England has been called on to clear herself from the heavy charge of idolatry. The ground she has taken, and the weapons she has employed in her defence, are those of which the Church of Rome made use in repelling the attack of the first reformers. By some it is thought, her champions find themselves, like David in Saul's armour, a little awkward in the use of their popish weapons; while they cannot forget that their arguments are those, of which they *once* disputed the force, and that a reasoning, which is not always conclusive, is never conclusive.

There is no association of ideas more habitual in this country, than that of Popery and superstition. The latter being inconsistent with morality, at least with an enlightened morality, I conceive it is perfectly within the plan of this inquiry, to examine on what foundation the religion of Rome has been denominated *superstition*. Superstition is the extravagance of religion, originating in fanciful and mistaken notions of the Deity and the divine dispensations. Its effect is, either to flatter men with the delusive hope of pleasing God by opinions and practices not allowable, or to terrify them with a groundless apprehension of

* "While, in the Trinitarian dispute, the *orthodox* regard their opponents as blasphemous, these consider the former as chargeable with idolatry." Monthly Review, Vol. LIX, p. 170.

of offending him by the omission of what he neither commands nor approves. Hence the idea of superstition implies an error concerning the terms of repentance, together with mistaken notions of the Deity, and of the obligation of performing that which is enjoined by no law. Now, as of different sects the opinions are different, relatively to these points, it may be expected, that to them who are less rigid, the more rigid doctrine or discipline will appear superstitious. Thus the Papist, who, in the matter of penance, besides unfeigned sorrow for sin, requires a distinct and verbal declaration or *confession* to be made to a priest, will undoubtedly by the established church be considered as an abettor of superstition. But will not the latter also be involved in the same guilt, while it maintains the necessity of works, which the Methodist denies, or while it requires the observance of certain ceremonies and other institutions, of which the Dissenters disapprove? "Who then shall exactly ascertain to us what superstition is? The Romanist is charged with it by the Church-of-England-man, the Churchman by the Presbyterian, the Presbyterian by the Independent, all by the Deist, and the Deist by the Atheist. With some, it is superstition to pray, with others, to receive the sacrament, with others to believe in revelation; with others, to believe in God *." To me it appears, that no argument can have weight to prove the religious practices of any society to be superstitious, unless it be first proved, that the principles on which these are grounded, are false and erroneous. For instance, if the prayers of the living are beneficial to the dead, how can it be superstition to believe in purgatory? If a man,

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* Olla Podrida, No. XIII. conjectured to be the production of the learned President of Magdalen College.—Published by the Printers of this.

after repentance, still remain obnoxious to certain *temporal punishments*, which, however, may on certain conditions be remitted to him, where is the superstition of *indulgences*? If, in the collective body of Christian prelates, there reside the same legislative power, of which it appears from scripture * that the apostles were possessed, how can it be superstition or bigotry in a Papist to observe the fasts and holidays appointed by his church? This observation applies not only to practices in the Romish church, but also to those of the church of England. If, for example, the heads of a national church are authorised to ordain ceremonies for the members of that church †, how can the observation of them be superstition? Also, if the government of Christian churches has been administered from the commencement of Christianity, by ministers invested in virtue of consecration, with powers distinct from, and superior to, those of the priesthood, how can episcopacy be deemed superstitious tyranny? It is evident, that none of the above-mentioned institutions can be reasonably pronounced superstitious, till the fallacy of the principles on which they are respectively founded, be first established.

It were to be wished, therefore, that men would more frequently consider the *grounds* of the different observances in religion, and their connexion with one another: they would not then, for every difference of ceremony, brand such as dissent from themselves with the odious epithets of *bigoted* and *superstitious*; nor should we hear, as we often do, those to be the loudest in the cry of superstition, who are least acquainted with the signification of that word. Hence it appears how little regard is to be paid to the clamour against Popish superstitions: it is the imputation of a

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vague

* Acts xv.

† This is asserted in the 29th of the 39 Articles.

vague, uncertain, undefinable crime, and therefore well suited to the vulgar. Superstition, I doubt not, is to be found among Roman Catholics, as well as other denominations; nor can the most bigoted churchman deny that it may be found in those of his own communion*.

The zeal of Protestants has been frequently awakened at the view of the numerous ruins of monastic edifices which have survived the ancient establishment, and which, at this distance of time, seem to depose that "from the beginning it was not so." To these, the zealot of the present day appeals, as monuments of ancient superstition. But with what justice?—The superstition of many actions, as indeed the morality of all, is to be estimated from the motives with which they are performed. He who expects that, by building a monastery, or by bequeathing a legacy to the church, he shall, without further difficulty, obtain the favour of Heaven, and by that way atone for unrepented crimes, is certainly superstitious: but if that man, after a life of repeated violence and rapine, be touched with repentance, and bestow the wealth he has acquired by injustice on those whom he believes likely to apply it to the best uses, I see not the connexion of such conduct with superstition. I believe, upon inquiry, it will appear that the two principal motives by which our ancestors were led to make their numerous bequests to the church, and their highly-liberal endowments of monastic communities, were, first, that of appropriating their riches to the benefit of themselves and relations after death, conformably to the tenets of the established

* It will scarcely be conceived how great a number of superstitious notions and practices are still remaining and prevalent in different parts of these kingdoms.—GROSE'S Provincial Glossary, 1787.

blished religion; and, secondly, of performing an act of justice, in consideration of the violent usurpations of either church or lay property, made in the course of those perpetual wars incidental to the feudal government. Of these motives, the last has nothing of superstition in it; and the first can only be so far deemed superstitious, as the doctrine of an intermediate state of suffering is supposed to be false; a supposition, denied by at least as many as they are by whom it is affirmed.

Superstition is generally the offspring of ignorance. It is not, therefore, wonderful that they who are charged with the former should bear the reproach of ignorance, and also of encouraging ignorance. But of this weighty accusation, what are the grounds? what are the proofs?—It will not be pretended that the Romish Clergy is less attentive than our own to the duty of preaching and of delivering private instruction. If any one be of this persuasion, he must be not only unacquainted with the injunctions and practices of the Romish Church, relatively to this point, but must be a stranger to the notion of what the vulgar calls a *Popish emissary*. Zeal and activity were never doubted to be among the ingredients of that character. If I am not mistaken, Bishop Burnet* himself does that justice to the Roman Catholic Clergy, to allow them the merit of assiduity in preaching and instructing the people: but they want not the *valuable*, because unwilling, testimony of Burnet; they appeal to those of this country who have either known them abroad, or observed them at home, and dare them, with all their partiality to the establishment, to deny that the

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Romish

Romish Clergy is, I say not, equal, but superior to our churchmen, in frequent instruction, and in the diligent inculcation of religious truths.

With respect to the holidays appointed in the book of Common Prayer, it is well known how religiously they are observed. In the Church of Rome, these days are observed with far greater exactness; and they who attend divine service depart not without the benefit of a practical discourse or lecture. Their sacraments, more frequently administered, because more in number than in the Church of England, are commonly attended with expositions suited to the occasion; and, what is principally to be remarked, catechism, both private and public, is performed with the utmost punctuality. In short, whoever considers this difference between Protestants and Papists, will be inclined to suspect that, as far as ignorance depends on the conduct of the clergy, the former are more obnoxious to this charge than the latter: and he will be confirmed in his suspicions, if he only observe more minutely the very inconsiderable degree of religious information in the lower people of this country, and the want of opportunity to acquire more: indeed, both have lately begun to appear so striking, and the consequences of them so alarming, that, to remedy the evil, a new institution has been adopted, I mean that of *Sunday-Schools*. They who have been most active in promoting that scheme of charity and benevolence, seem to have considered the necessity of the measure more than the origin of that necessity. Had they investigated the latter, they would, I am confident, have quickly discovered the want of moral instruction in the people, to originate in the neglect and inability of the clergy to comply with the catechetical part of their office. Let pluralities be abolished; let residence be enjoined; and let the canons,

canons, which require frequent catechism, be enforced; and, I am persuaded, the loud and opprobrious complaint of ignorance in the lower classes will cease*. The continual outrages against society, and the continual executions of criminals, which reflect so much dishonour on this country, are pronounced by all to be melancholy proofs of the ignorance as well as of the depravity of the people. If it be so, and if the above facts be thought to prove a want of instruction, as I am sure they do a want of principle among us, surely it is with a very bad grace that we reproach Papists with ignorance.

It may however be said, and I own, more plausibly, that certain regulations of the Romish Church tend towards the encouragement of ignorance in the people; and on this occasion the † *Inden*

* About the time when the last royal proclamation against immorality appeared, a sensible and well-written letter was inserted in the General Evening Post, from an *Old Magistrate*, in which the necessity of the clergy co-operating with the magistracy, and the inefficacy of every penal law, without such co-operation, is very pointedly asserted. "That effectual guard," the letter-writer observes, "which fear, so easily conquered by habit, cannot alone instill, must be derived from early and constant instruction, moral motives, and a sort of instinctive reverence; for the expediency of such laws can never be efficaciously admitted, unless the knowledge of God and a futurity, the principles of good and evil, and their necessary consequence to a rational being in a probationary state, be as duly inculcated, as the British legislature requires by its statutes, and encourages by its ample support of an ecclesiastical establishment. . . . But do the judicial and executive powers derive from the clergy that assistance which they are bound to give, and without which preventive justice is impossible, and punitive can be only sanguinary and capital? . . . Can the people be reformed by punishment, without due instruction and example? or those afforded without the most regular performance of our religious rites? or that legally attended to, without a resident minister? In correcting, therefore, the seminaries of vice, let the executive power restore too those of virtue to their appointed efficacy. A zealous clergy would nearly ensure an active magistracy."

† A catalogue of some of the most remarkable books published at different times against the Romish religion, and on that account forbidden

Index expurgatorius, and prohibition of the scriptures are brought forward with ostentatious confidence.

That there scarcely appeared one valuable work on the subject, either of science or morality, which has not been some time proscribed in the *Index*, is an assertion of which only the unawed effrontery of the anonymous Encyclopedists was capable *. The design of the *Index* was to point out such books as were judged improper to be read by Roman Catholics. The principle by which it has been justified, is that the circulation of writings against the religion established by law is inexpedient and pernicious. Now whatever be thought of this principle, certain it is, that Protestants as well as Papists have adopted it both in theory and in practice. In every country the established religion has been generally supported by penal laws; and among these, one will always be found prohibiting the publication of books against the religion of the state. † Even our own country is no exception in this matter. He who has looked into our statutes, must have observed that some of our Protestant Princes in England were as little friends to the freedom of thinking or writing, as the Popish contemporaries on the continent ‡. Nor let it be said that these statutes were designed to restrain the freedom of political inquiry, the contrary

is forbidden to be read by Roman Catholics. This catalogue, it is said, was neither revised nor approved by the Council of Trent, but only by Pope Pius; and therefore is not regarded in several Popish countries.

* *Art. Index.*

† The court of high commissioners, in the reigns of Elizabeth and James, punished at discretion all words and writings that had a tendency to heresy or schism. — *HUME's History*, Vol. IV. p. 158.

‡ 3 and 4 Edward VI. c. 10. 3 Jac. I. c. 1. Queen Elizabeth's proclamation against the importation of forbidden books and pamphlets, under pain of martial law, may be seen in *STRYPE's Ecclesiastical Memoirs*, Vol. III. p. 570.

trary is evident, from the very tenor of the acts, as well as from the circumstances of time in which they were passed *. Now, relatively to liberty of thinking and writing, for that is the point to be considered, this surely is no less effected, when a book is condemned by the Parliament, or by the King's proclamation, than when it is entered in the *Roman Index*. Indeed to me it appears that religious liberty has more to fear from the former circumstance, than from the latter. The power of the King and Parliament is uncontested, uncontrolled, supported by the whole weight of the legislature, and so extensive as to comprehend every individual of the church and state; while the authority of the *Index* is circumscribed within the limits of certain countries; nor can it even there be exerted without the consent of the clergy of those countries. Hence it appears that Protestants are not unacquainted with the principle on which the *Index* proceeds in prohibiting what are deemed to be heterodox writings: and if to recriminate were to refute, it would not be difficult for Catholics to clear themselves of the charge of encouraging ignorance. If, however, the consequence be insisted upon, that ignorance is encouraged by the prohibition of certain books, let it be extended, without partiality, to all who are concerned in the premises; let Protestant England, as well as Papal Rome, be included in the charge: let it plead equally guilty; at least, let it not throw the first stone at its accomplice in guilt.

The outcry against Popery for having forbidden its followers the reading of the Bible, is yet louder than that which has been raised by the above-mentioned cause. Against this prohibi-
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* Huine, speaking of the reigns of Elizabeth and her successor, says, "that liberty of conscience, which we so highly value at present, was totally suppressed." Vol. VI. p. 158.

on the reformed have exclaimed with greater zeal and unanimity, than on most other occasions. Of the Romish doctrines there is scarcely one which has not been so fortunate as to find an abettor in some or other of the Protestant sects*; but the prohibition of the scriptures has met with such universal disapprobation, that I know not one of the reformed who has attempted to justify it. One exception perhaps must be made to the latitude of this assertion. Henry VIII, some years after his rupture with the Pope, procured an act to be passed in parliament, by which he forbade the lower classes of his subjects to read the scriptures either in public or in private†. It is remarkable that, in the preamble to this act, the very same motives are stated for enacting it, which the Romish divines have assigned in justification of that rule of the *Index* which restrains the indiscriminate reading of the sacred writings. Pope Pius, therefore, and his divines, were not singular in their ideas of the necessity of some restriction on the common people in the use of the Bible. Indeed, from the very beginning of our present church establishment, it has been usual for the clergy to inveigh against that "fearlessness of assertion," and that licentiousness of interpretation which are produced through the ignorance and presumption of incompetent readers. But, notwithstanding they have established the premises, in common with Roman Catholics, yet they have appeared shocked at the conclusion, though inevitable. They have seen and acknowledged the abuse of the inspired volumes, when subjected to the comments, or rather to the illusions of an ignorant and giddy multitude;

* This is evident from *Brerely's Apology*, published in the reign of James I. about the year 1608, under this title, *The Protestants Apology for the Roman Church*.

† 34 and 5, Hen. VIII. c. 1.

itude* ; and, in the history of England, during the last century, they have beheld disorders unprecedented, and acts the most atrocious, at once suggested and defended by the misconception of scripture doctrines; and yet they are shocked at the application of the only effectual remedy, that of restraining the indiscriminate reading of the scriptures. I am, indeed, well aware of the impossibility of a restrictive scheme being carried into execution among Protestants. Were these of a temper to submit tamely to such a restriction, still its absurdity would prevent any attempt to impose it. The Bible is the entire code of a Protestant's belief: to take that from him, therefore, would be to take away his religion. He acknowledges no revelation; he admits no belief nor practice to be obligatory, but what he finds in his Bible. On the other hand, the Roman Catholic is taught to consider the scripture neither as the *only*, nor as the *essential*, rule of his faith. When, therefore, he is told that, of them who read the sacred books, many pervert them to their ruin; and that, from frequent experience of this abuse, the heads of his church have been led to lay some restraint on the people in the use of them, he is not afraid of being deprived of his religion with his Bible; because he has learned that, as Christianity existed before the scriptures were written, so it may continue when these cease to be read. He will not believe it more impossible that circumstances should justify a restraint on reading the Bible, than that they should more than once have authorised Protestants to lay a restraint upon preaching. In the reign of Edward VI, it was forbidden to preach; and,

* Queen Elizabeth, in her speech to Parliament, in the year 1534, said, " that, as she could discern the presumption of many " in curiously canvassing the scriptures, she would no longer endure this license." HUME, Vol. V. p. 264.

and, at the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, a proclamation was issued, by which all preaching was prohibited, without a special license*. Yet is the office of preaching a divine appointment; and its obligation is expressed both in the Gospels and in the Epistles of St. Paul, with far more decisive evidence than that of reading the Bible†. If, therefore, the heads of a reformed church, in all the primitive fervour of reformation, were so bold as to suspend, on account of the peculiar exigence of the times, the exercise of a divine commission, I see not with what justice the members of that church now reproach Roman Catholics for having taken a less liberty in a matter of less moment: for, by the discipline of the Romish church, even when and where it was observed relatively to this matter, I find the use of the Bible was never prohibited, but only regulated; not withdrawn from the laity, but secured from the conceitedness of the presumptuous, and the caprice of the fanatical. Even that discouragement which is expressed in the *Index*, from permitting the unlimited use of the Bible to the vulgar, appears to have been only occasional, and to have been suggested more by the particular circumstances of the times, than by any original or characteristic doctrine of the Catholic profession. Above one hundred years ago, the injunction so often alluded to was considered by many eminent writers of the Romish church, more as a temporary expedient to prevent the circulation of unfaithful versions at the time it appeared, than as an article of general discipline‡. At this day, the Catholics

* See Hume's History of England, Vol. IV. p. 309, and Vol. V. p. 7.

† Math. c. xxviii. v. 19 and 20. Mark, c. xvi. v. 15 and 16. Acts, c. iv. 2 Tim. c. iv.

‡ In this light it has been considered by Pere Amelotte, Cardinal Richelieu, Gretser, Serrarius, and Nicole.

tholics in England, France, and Germany, are as free and unmolested in reading the Bible, as the Protestants of any sect whatever; and, if the above-mentioned rule in the *Index* be regarded by Catholics of other countries, it is, I suppose, more through awe of an ancient, unrepealed statute, than through conviction of any actual advantage from the observance of it.

It is not however my business to inquire how far a restraint thus qualified, on reading the scriptures, is consistent with the liberal spirit of Christianity; but whether it be productive of wickedness and immorality. The divine may perhaps be not easily reconciled to it; but the politician will, I believe, see nothing in it to alarm his apprehensions for the safety of the commonwealth.

I know it has been often asserted that the prohibition of the scriptures is the effect of a well-grounded fear, lest the people should remain no longer ignorant and attached to such superstitions, as it is confidently supposed they would discover to be totally unfounded in the sacred writings. Of this insinuation, it is hard to say whether the folly or injustice be greater. What! is it credible that the Romish clergy should apprehend a detection of pious frauds from the ignorance of an undiscerning vulgar, rather than from the acuteness, the erudition, and application of more learned and enlightened readers?—Doubtless they have much to fear from the stupidity and dulness of unlettered mechanics, who have yet seen nothing to fear from the bold and liberal inquiries of a Bossuet, a Calmet, and a Geddis! They who are most forward in throwing out these suspicions are at the same time the very first to magnify the deep-laid policy, the well connected and widely-comprehensive system of papal superstition. But if the hierarchy of Rome dreaded the discovery of I know not what impostures, surely this artful and

and enterprising body would have shown more of that wonderful policy which is so liberally attributed to it on other occasions, by wresting the Bible from the *learned*, than by laying a merely temporary and occasional restraint on the use made of it by the *unlearned*.

I will conclude these observations with a few words on the common complaint of Popery being destructive of free inquiry. If this system*, like that of Mahomet, suppressed in its votaries every effort of genius, if like that, it condemned every attempt to enlarge the boundaries of science and ingenuity, it would then deserve every degree of discouragement which even *our* penal statutes against Popery have authorised and inflicted. But of so dangerous a tendency in this religion, what is the proof? or rather, what is the pretence? Is it that the mind, reposing on *infallibility* becomes indolent and incapable of examination, resigning all its powers to a blind credulity, and a torpid acquiescence in every doctrine proposed?—Let it be remembered, that they who allow the force of this argument, admit also themselves an *infallible* authority, to wit, the scripture, of the contents of which, they judge it no less impious to doubt than a Roman Catholic does to doubt of the doctrines of his church. A revelation, it seems, is received by both as infallible, and as competent to control the private judgment of the believer, whether Catholic or Protestant, The authority of revelation being determined on both sides to be indisputable, the only subject therefore of inquiry, is the extent of this revelation; that is, whether it comprehends the creed of Pope Pius, or whether it be confined to the thirty-nine articles. Now to enter upon this inquiry is as freely

* His conquering tribes th' Arabian Prophet draws,
And saving ignorance in thrones by laws.

ly permitted and as earnestly recommended by the religion of Rome as by all the boasted indulgence of Protestantism. A Catholic who seeks to learn what has been revealed concerning any articles of his faith, is as much at liberty to consult his *church* as a Protestant is to consult his *Bible*. But when these have once decided, neither can reasonably question, much less reject, the authority of the decision*. Where then is the superiority of the Protestant over the Papist, in this business? Is it that the former, after having learned his creed from his Bible, may lay it aside, if he pleases, and take up another?—Such a licence may indeed be tolerated from necessity, because, if claimed, it cannot be denied without violating the fundamental principle of Protestantism; but how far it is consistent with the idea of *faith* expressed in the writings of the New Testament, I leave to others to determine.

Popery has been represented, not only as spreading darkness over the understanding, by the artifices above mentioned, but also as corrupting the heart by a spirit of uncharitableness and misanthropy: for what else, it has been asked, could lead persons of that persuasion to consign all besides themselves to everlasting misery? What place can be left for benevolence in that mind which connects the idea of atrocious guilt with involuntary error, and judges the belief of speculative opinions to be

* “What liberty of discussion, or, if you will, of doubting, does any Christian possess, that we have not?—When we are convinced that God has spoken it, it would be infidelity not to submit. What matters it from whence this conviction may arise?—You are convinced from scripture alone; we from scripture as interpreted to us: but there is a time when we are both convinced. After this, indeed, if you still choose to search, I own it is a liberty to which we do not pretend.”——
BERINGTON'S Address to Hawkins, p. 31 and 32.

be of equal importance with the discharge of moral obligations? The *excluding doctrine* certainly does seem to convey a very pointed reflection on the judgment and conduct of all who are not Papists; and, stated as it commonly has been, is equally inconsistent with either charity or truth. This doctrine has accordingly been constantly objected to Roman Catholics, in terms of the most poignant reproach and keenest resentment. It is generally believed, that these zealots pronounce sentence of eternal damnation on all who die out of their own communion; and that every man of whatever moral character, not fortunate enough to have been a Papist, is considered by them as incapable of future happiness. Truly, "this is a hard saying, and who can bear to hear it?" It is not however, that of Roman Catholics.

They indeed teach, that the author of Christianity disclosed to mankind a new system of revealed truths, and a new scheme of religious worship, that these were committed, for their preservation and promulgation, to a society by him established, and called *the church*; that this church does not consist of many independant bodies, disunited in belief and government, but that it is a society of Christians, all admitting the same articles of belief, and the same forms of ecclesiastical polity, that the church being of divine establishment, its creed and government of divine institution, men are not left to their own caprice and humour in the choice of religion, but are obliged to become members of that society, and professors of that faith, of which the foundations are common with those of Christianity itself. Hence a Roman Catholic obviously infers, not that every one who lives in a different persuasion from his own, will be unhappy in a future state; but that he who omits to embrace that communion among Christians, in which he

sincerely

sincerely believes the profession of Christianity to be the purest and most unadulterated, is guilty of counteracting the beneficent views of Providence in the constitution of a church. They are not the ignorant or misinformed whom he condemns; but such as, having known the truth, are withheld from acknowledging it, either by fear, like Nicodemus, or by human respects, like many of the Jewish nobles*. Yet of individuals he judges no man; because the circumstances of an individual, on which his guilt depends, are known only to God and himself.

This is all the *real* ground of that eternal crimination of uncharitableness with which Roman Catholics have been loaded. And to what does it amount? That this people, believing, as it does, the church of Christ to be of one faith and one communion, thinks all men, whom the plea of ignorance does not excuse, obliged to embrace that faith and communion. This is the so much execrated doctrine of *exclusive salvation*.

But has this doctrine found no advocates among Protestants? By the 18th of the 39 Articles, all pagans are excluded from heaven. By the damnatory clause, damnation is denounced against him who denies any article in the creed of Athanasius. Many also of the most eminent divines in our country, have spoken the very language used by Roman Catholics on this subject†. The separation of Protestant Dissenters from the church, is represented in the book of canons

* John, ch. xii. v. 42, 43, gives this reason why they believed not in Christ, or rather why they avowed not their belief in him: "By reason of the Pharisees, they did not confess him . . . for they loved the glory of men, more than the glory of God."

† Among these, I find the names of Bishop Pearson, *Exposition of the Creed*, p. 349; Mr. Thorndike, *Letter on the Present State of Religion*; Dr. Field, *on the Church*, b. i. c. 2.

canons as "a wicked error," and as deserving excommunication; two censures, that openly threaten Dissenters with an exclusion from future happiness. The Managers for the Commons, at a conference with the Lords, on the bill *against occasional conformity*, in the year 1703, justified the severe clauses of that bill, by this among other reasons, that "schism is a damnable sin*." And among other petitions in the Litany, one is, that we may be delivered from *heresy* and *schism*; which can only be considered as real evils by those who believe salvation is endangered by the want of catholic communion, that is, who maintain the doctrine of exclusive salvation.

It has lately been the fashion to extol the liberality of our church establishment, and on every occasion to contrast it with the narrow selfishness of Popery. Yet the unfortunate coincidence of the former in that very opinion, for which Papists are reproached with bigotry and selfishness, is so remarkable, that it cannot but render these commendations somewhat suspicious. The orthodox may indeed please themselves with the idea, and compliment one another with the praise of distinguished tolerance and liberality; but they do well not to appeal to the infidel or dissenter for the justice of their claim to such exalted merit.

Since Protestants, as well as Catholics, have maintained the excluding doctrine, the charge of uncharitableness must, according to the rules of equity, affect the former as well as the latter. The pretence for finding Catholics alone guilty, because these confine the church within the pale of their own communion, is frivolous. Does the

* Proceedings of both Houses of Parliament, 1702-3-4, upon the bill to prevent occasional conformity, p. 12, 13.

the church of England extend the attainment of salvation to any other than Christians*? With equal justice then may the Jew or Mahometan reproach that church with uncharitableness. Yet a Protestant thinks the Papist void of charity, because he denies salvation to all who are not Roman Catholics, which is not true: and on the other hand, the latter esteems a Protestant little less than a free-thinker, because, with undistinguishing indulgence, he opens the gates of the church to all, even the most discordant sects of Christianity. But before any solid foundation can be assigned for these mutual reproaches, the nature and extent of the Christian church should be ascertained. The solution of this problem depends on what is the criterion of revelation, or what is the *rule of faith*. Therefore this question being yet undecided, at least to the satisfaction of both parties, it is absurd to argue from principles before they are established, and to apply to persons those epithets which can only be justified by conclusions drawn from doubtful premises. For instance, a Roman Catholic, for maintaining the doctrine of exclusive salvation, is reproached by a Protestant with want of charity and benevolence. Why? Because he conceives the former to entertain illiberal notions of the constitution and extent of the Christian church, by confining orthodoxy and salvation to that society of which he is a member. But who does not perceive this logic is merely local, and only conclusive in a Protestant latitude? By it, the same man may be proved a bigot in England, who on the continent is esteemed an orthodox and enlightened Christian.

One thinks on Calvin Heav'n's own spirit fell,
Another deems him instrument of hell. POPE.

E If,

* See the 18th of our 39 Articles.

If, however, "it behoveth heresies to be," at least let those who contend for the exercise of private judgment, allow as much liberty to Roman Catholics, in judging who are, and who are not, orthodox, as they assume to themselves when they hold up dissenters, both Protestant and Catholic, as guilty of schism and "wicked errors *." It is surely time to desist from a charge which cannot be supported without involving the accusers with the accused.

Persecution. That all churches have persecuted, when possessed of the power to do it, seems to be universally agreed. The annals of both ancient and modern church history, establish this fact beyond the possibility of doubt: yet in England, where this is confessed †, the Church

* See Canons X. XI. in the year 1603. These, and the same may be said of almost all the twelve first Canons, were framed by men, whose ideas of church unity and toleration appear to have been borrowed from Papists. No one can read the 9th, 10th, and 11th, in the collection above cited, without perceiving that the purport of them is to represent the separation of dissenters as criminal and schismatical, as a "wicked error," and deserving ecclesiastical censure. Of the 10th and 11th in particular, it may be observed, that they seem to deny, in terms not at all equivocal, dissenters to belong to a *true and lawful church*. With such sentiments, it seems difficult to reconcile any superior claim of our establishment over the church of Rome, to the merit of liberality and toleration.

† See Robertson's History of Charles V. Vol. IV. p. 205, 296. In the passage here referred to, Dr. Robertson affects to be surprised at the continuance of religious persecution after the period of the Reformation, and informs his readers, that the reformers borrowed their ideas of intolerance from Popery. It cannot be doubted, but that the Doctor has read the works of a man whom he extols so highly, I mean, of Luther. In the writings of his admired apostle, he might have found the following passage: "Were I master of the empire, I would make one bundle of Popes and Cardinals, and throw them all together into the sea: such a cold bath would cure them." It is easy to suppose how tolerant were likely to be the disciples of so mild, so gentle, and benevolent a master.

Church of Rome is ever distinguished among all others, as that which alone persecutes from principle. Hence every Protestant naturally associates the idea of cruelty with that of Popery. I own, after a diligent inquiry, I have never been able to discover that principle of Popery, by which its professors are said to persecute religious dissenters. If it does really exist, it ought to appear either in the canons of some general Council, or in catechisms, or in the instructions addressed to Papists by their clergy. In which of all these may it be found? Not in their sermons, nor in their catechisms, nor in the decrees of any general Synod. Relatively to the last, though it should seem that even a general Council had enjoined to Roman Catholic princes, that they should persecute reputed heretics within their States, yet would such an injunction constitute no term of Catholic communion, and no principle of Catholic duty. The Church of Rome, assembled in a general Council, exacts obedience indeed to her *dogmatical* decisions, but not to every regulation by her enacted concerning the infliction of *temporal* punishments. To regulate such concerns is an act, not of spiritual, but of civil jurisdiction; and as the Church pretends not to have received from its founder any temporal power, it cannot, without a palpable encroachment on the rights of princes, interfere with authority in their concerns, so far as to point out to them who are the objects of legal severity or restraint. This reasoning, *à priori*, intended to prove that Roman Catholics profess no principle which leads to persecution, is powerfully confirmed by the history of past and present times. It does not appear, that from Charles V. down to Joseph II. any of the Emperors have been accused, or even suspected, of a departure from their religious principles, because they abstained from persecution.

tion*. The same remark applies to the Kings of France, from Henry IV. to Lewis XIV. Nor Henry, nor his son, nor grandson, were persecutors of the Hugonots during the space of a century : yet is the orthodoxy of all these princes unimpeached. His present Christian Majesty issued an *arret*, 1787, highly favourable to the French Protestants ; and this under the administration of a Popish Archbishop : yet no suspicion concerning the faith of either has been even whispered abroad. It is therefore a mistake, of which malignity, I fear, is more the cause than ignorance, to assert that persecution is a principle of the Romish religion. It will not be denied, that many and violent persecutions have been carried on by the Church of Rome against her adversaries ; but from this confession, to conclude that Roman Catholics persecute from principle, is such a gross perversion of the powers of reasoning, as it would be only folly to refute. One would imagine Protestants were too conscious how far they are concerned in the premises, to draw from them a conclusion, of which the disgrace must recoil forcibly upon themselves : for surely, if Roman Catholics are persecutors from principle, because men of their communion have persecuted ; by the same mode of arguing, it may be proved, that Protestants are equally intolerant. Of the latter, that may with truth be said, which the partiality of one of our Prelates † thought proper to apply only to Papists, “ Never had they mercy long, “ when they had power.” If that Right Reverend Prelate should think this a bold assertion, it is hoped he will not attempt to refute it from the history of his own country.

Protestants,

* In consequence of the treaty of Passau, 1552, confirmed by the Diet at Augsburg, 1555, and of the peace of Westphalia, 1648.

† Dr. Porteus, Bishop of London, in his *Brief Confutation of the Errors of the Church of Rome*, p. 85.

Protestants, I repeat it, English Protestants, have exercised the same rigours with which they reproach Roman Catholics ; and, to support their establishment, have called in the aid of the stake and the gibbet. The writ *De hæretico comburendo* was not repealed till more than a century after Popery had ceased to be the religion of the nation, and during that time, it was put in execution by Henry VIII, Edward VI, Elizabeth, and James. If we may believe De Foe and Delaune, nearly eight thousand Protestant Dissenters were destroyed in England and Scotland, by confinement and public executions, in one only reign, that of Charles II. † The number is certainly astonishing ; yet after the most ample deductions, it is far greater than of those who suffered under the Popish Queen Mary. The royal commissioners employed by Charles in Scotland, Middleton, Rothes, Lauderdale, and Queensbury, were not more tender of the religious than of the civil rights of the people. Their conduct towards the Presbyterians may well be compared with that of Lewis XIV. towards the calvinists, after he had revoked the Edict of Nantz*. Also when the Dissenters came into power under the Protectorate of Cromwell, it is well known with what severity they enforced their favourite discipline. They then retaliated on the church, for all the rigorous treatment they had before received from it.

It is not wonderful that they who exercised such rigours on Dissenters, who were Protestants, should sharpen the edge of persecution to its utmost keenness against those who, to dissent from the

† See the preface to Delaune's *Plea for Nonconformists*, and that work, p. 28, 29. This publication was punished by a fine and imprisonment of the author, under which he languished till his death, 1685.

* Hume, Vol. VII. VIII, chap. 66.

the establishment, added the inexpressible guilt of Popery. Whatever was the cause, laws were enacted in this kingdom, soon after the Reformation was introduced, as bloody as any of those which had been framed by Popish Princes and States; and where those laws were not bloody, they were worse, as they were slow cruel outrages on our nature, and kept men alive only to insult, in their persons, every one of the rights and feelings of humanity †. It is unnecessary to particularise them, only to enumerate them, is to expose to infamy the statute book, in which they still appear, written, like Draco's laws, in characters of blood ‡. Were crimes against society the objects of this legal proscription; were the robber, the assassin, or the traitor, aimed at in these sanguinary edicts, it were well; but the refusal of an oath ambiguously worded, of assisting at the established worship, the support of their own ministers, the attendance at their public service, and the observance of their religious rites, such are the offences which have drawn upon Papists the whole vengeance of the legislature. I know it is pretended, that these penalties were originally enacted against Roman Catholics, not on religious, but on political considerations, and that it was not their religion, but their politics, which excited the apprehension of the magistrate. With what truth this is suggested, shall be hereafter considered, at present it is sufficient to remark, that this is the very
same

† Burke's Speech to the Electors at Bristol.

‡ The fury of that government which devised these bloody acts against Popery, has appeared so remarkable to two Protestant expositors of St. John's *Revelation*, that they have discovered in it a completion of the mysterious pouring out of the third vial upon *the rivers and fountains of waters*. It is impossible to impress a stronger idea of the sufferings of Roman Catholics, than that which is suggested by this interpretation. See Mede and Lauchlan Taylor on the *Revelation*, c. xvi, v. 4.

same plea which is constantly urged by every persecuting power. It was the apology of Charles V, of Queen Mary, of Philip II, and of Lewis XIV, for their attempts against the religious rights of their respective subjects. And he must be a bigot indeed, who will deny these princes to have had as much to fear from the turbulence of the reformed, as Elizabeth and James had to apprehend from the conduct of Roman Catholics.

It is not only, therefore, the code of Theodosius*,
nor

* Judge Blackstone attributes the capital punishments of the Donatists and Manicheans, to the influence enjoyed by the Romish ecclesiastics over the weak Princes Theodosius and Justinian. An assertion so confident, lies open to many observations. 1st, it is probable that the Judge's clerical acquaintance will not be pleased with him for complimenting Popery with an origin of such honourable antiquity. If Popery was the religion of the East and West, at the beginning of the fifth century, many will suspect that its pretended corruptions may derive from this circumstance something of that sanction and respectability which have been thought of late no feeble supports of the Church of England's doctrine of the Trinity; nor will the Papists of the present day think themselves a little obliged to the learned Judge for the very plausible pretext he has afforded them, of adding to the number of apologists for Popery, the respectable names of Jerom, Augustin, and Chrysostom. 2dly, If there existed in the fifth and sixth ages Romish ecclesiastics who did not persecute, it is an argument of what I am now contending for, that Papists do not persecute *from principle*. Now, 3dly, that the clergy did not procure from the Emperors, the severe rescripts against the Donatists and Manicheans, is highly probable; not to say morally evident. I challenge any man, conversant in the writings of that period, to produce a single passage justifying, or tending to justify, the capital punishment of heresy, out of any ecclesiastical author who wrote from the accession of Constantine till the reign of the younger Theodosius. Many expressions of a directly contrary tendency, were this a proper place for them, might be adduced from the works of the Christian Prelates of those times. These have been industriously collected, and impartially represented, by the learned Abbé Hooke, *Principia Religionis Naturalis et Revelatæ*, Vol. III. p. 544. 5. 6. ed. 2, 1773. It is not therefore conformable to history, to ascribe the severe edicts of Theodosius and Justinian against religious dissenters, to the authority of Churchmen over the minds of those weak Princes.

nor the *holy office* of Spain and Portugal, which threaten destruction to the disbeliever of the established faith, but also the mild, the tolerant, the enlightened legislature of Great Britain. Relatively to the rigours exercised against reputed heretics, under popish governments, though nothing can justify them; yet, in the opinion of many, and these not partial to popery, there is a circumstance which, if it be considered, will in some degree palliate them. It is a principle advanced by President Montesquieu* which seems to have been admitted by Hume†, and certainly was by Rousseau‡, that, where the magistrate is satisfied

Princes. May we not attribute them, with more reason, to the jealous despotism of the Cæsars, who, from controversial discord, apprehended the transition might be easy to political animosity? The first Christian Emperors, it is well known, bore the title of *Pontifex Maximus*. Now, though together with it they did not claim the plenitude of pontifical jurisdiction assumed by their Pagan predecessors, still would they consider a departure from that creed, to which they had given a sanction, as an attack on the Imperial prerogative; and subject, as such, to the rigours of legal justice. It is not more than two hundred years ago that the modern salutary practice of toleration would have appeared to statesmen and ecclesiastics, to philosophers and zealots, subversive of civil society. Even so great a reasoner as Lord Bacon, thought that uniformity in religion was absolutely necessary to the support of government. [*de unitate ecclesiæ*.] Thus, every magistrate opposed innovations in religion from their first appearance, and employed against them all the terrors of law, to discourage their propagation§. Is it therefore wonderful that two Princes of weak minds, and on that account open to jealousy and suspicion, should have adopted the same political ideas, that have influenced succeeding rulers, and should have dreaded, from a toleration of sectaries, the subversion of the Imperial power? This seems to me a far more philosophical method of accounting for the origin of persecution, than to imagine, without any warrant from history, I know not what fascinating influence of Romish ecclesiastics over the feeble minds of the Emperors.

§ HUME, Vol. VI. p. 158.

* *Esprit des Loix*, Liv. xxv. c. 10.

† *History of England*, Vol. VII. p. 41.

‡ *Lettres de la Montagne*.

satisfied with the established religion, he ought to repress the first attempts towards innovation, and only grant a toleration to sects that are already diffused and established. Now, when we consider the antiquity of the Romish religion, it will be found to have had a prior establishment to every other form of worship which it has at any time persecuted. The doctrines of the dissenters from Popery, in the 12th and 13th centuries, of Wiclef, of John Hus, no less than those of Luther and Calvin, cannot be denied to have been innovations in the religion established by law. To exclude them, therefore, in the first instance, the preachers of these doctrines were not improperly, according to the above mentioned authorities, made subject to legal coercion. This I am sensible, is no apology for all the cruelties employed by Roman Catholic Princes against their Protestant subjects: yet it is an extenuation of many of them. The same, it is plain, cannot be said to exculpate those plans of intolerance and compulsion adopted by the reformed. Persecution in a Papist, is the effect of malignity and impolicy; but in a Protestant, besides all this, it is downright absurdity, an inconsistency with the very first principle of Protestantism.

They who consider persecution to be an essential part of the Romish religion, may now, in the very sensible abatement of persecution among Papists, behold, with pleasure, an important and happy symptom of the decline of Popery throughout Europe. Certain it is, that in Rome, the capital of popish orthodoxy, not one has suffered death since the beginning of this century. In Spain and Portugal, the fires of the Inquisition are either wholly or nearly extinguished; and in other Catholic States, the progress of toleration has been at least equal to what it has been in this country.

I know

I know not any instance of intolerant bigotry in Catholic countries, comparable, either for its recency or its violence, to that which was exhibited in these kingdoms, in the years 1779 and 1780. Surely this nation must have possessed a more than ordinary share of religious animosity and fanaticism, when, in the 18th century, the repeal of only one or two penalties, out of many remaining against Papists, could not be made without endangering, I say not the peace, but the very existence of the empire. The audacious tumults here alluded to, are indeed said to have been the sudden outrage of a lawless rabble: perhaps I should apologize to the *Protestant Association* for so undignified an appellation of that body: yet, if we turn our eyes to the Commons of Great-Britain, we find them, soon after the Riots, little disposed to administer the smallest consolation to those of his majesty's subjects, whom nothing but difference of religion had exposed to the loss of their property and danger of their lives. On the motion of a Noble Lord, they resolved that the 18 Geo. III. does not render ineffectual the several statutes made to prohibit the *exercise of the Popish religion* previous to the statute of 11 and 12 Gul. III. that all attempts to seduce the youth of this kingdom from the established church to Popery, are highly criminal according to the laws in force, and are a proper subject of farther regulation: at the same time the House passed an act for more effectually restraining Papists from *teaching* or taking upon them the education of Protestant children*. On these resolutions, I shall only remark that they do not discover all that perfection of liberality which we attribute, with the most exulting complacency, to the government of this country—But the magnanimity of

* June 20, 1780.

of the Peers revolted at such illiberality, and, by rejecting the bill, rescued at once the Catholics from oppression, and the legislature from infamy.

It is impossible to dismiss this subject, without mentioning the *Inquisition*. From the manner in which our writers speak of that tribunal, one would imagine that it was established in every Catholic kingdom, and that it was no less essential to the Church of Rome, than the Pope himself. The truth is, that the Inquisition is as little known in most Catholic countries, as it is in England. Where it is continued, it is supported by the civil, not by the ecclesiastical power; the former finding it an engine well suited to the dark, jealous, relentless policy of an unlimited constitution: for this service it is retained, rather than for the purpose of religious persecution*. The *holy office*, as it is undeservedly called, is one of those melancholy remains of ancient barbarism and intolerance, the view of which should excite our gratitude to Heaven for the present spirit of humanity and toleration. When we consider the general practice of persecution in the 16th century, a practice, of which even the light of reformation could not discover the absurdity; what wonder, that in the 13th century, the Inquisition should have been established? "If the High Court of Commission, which was an "inquisitorial tribunal, with all its terrors and "iniquities†," was erected by Elizabeth, and continued through the whole reign of James, and the greater part of that of his successor, no one, acquainted with the history of society and manners in the 13th age, and with the character of Innocent III, will be surprised at the establishment

* This idea concerning the Inquisition is confirmed by M. L. T. Spittler, in his *Historical Essay on the Spanish Inquisition*. Hanover, 1788.

† Hume.

ment then made of the Court of inquisition. It is more surprising that a jurisdiction so terrible and iniquitous should continue to be exercised at the present day. However, if it be really exercised, we must consider how unwilling men of all denominations are to resign a power of which they have been long possessed, and how reluctant has been at all times the surrender made by princes of prerogative in favour of liberty. “L’ame goûte tant de délices à dominer les autres ames,” says Montesquieu *. To such as with clamorous importunity demand why the Inquisition has not been entirely and universally suppressed—I beg leave to propose the following queries: Why was not the High Court of Commission sooner abolished? Why was the writ *de hæretico comburendo* not sooner reversed? or, what is still more pertinent, Why have not the penal laws against Roman Catholics been repealed?

*Faithlessness
of Papists to
such as dis-
sent from
them in re-
ligion.*

One other exception to the moral doctrines of Papists, remains to be considered; which is, faithlessness to those of a different religious persuasion. It is not difficult to trace the origin of this heavy accusation. When the severities of a Protestant government towards Roman Catholics were to be justified to the public, it was at first pretended, that, as Catholics dissented from the religion of the State, and adhered to a belief proscribed by law, they were therefore justly punished for a violation of the laws of their country. After this, when toleration was recommended either by political prudence, or by the example of other nations, then the exclusion of Roman Catholics from the benefit of that toleration, was defended on a new ground: this was be-
cause

* Liv. xxviii. c. 41.

cause the latter maintained doctrines hostile to civil society, and repugnant to the security of government. It was then discovered that Papists, among other pernicious tenets, held themselves dispensed from all obligation of keeping their engagements or promises made to heretics; but, as the conduct of Roman Catholics, all over Europe, in their unavoidable intercourse with persons of all persuasions, seemed to render that aspersion utterly incredible, the charge of Popish faithlessness was modified anew. From general, it was made special; that is, the want of principle, of which Roman Catholics were accused, was pretended to extend, not to all their dealings with heretics, but only to those particular transactions in which the interest of the Holy Church was concerned. Thus, it was not a positive or direct crimination, but a wanton surmise, a wild conjecture, that in certain circumstances, men knew not what, Catholics would not observe that fidelity in their engagements, which it could not be denied they uniformly discovered in their general commerce with mankind.

Such vague and groundless insinuations could never have been regarded but by the malevolent or the credulous. If a breach of promise were really sanctified, in the opinion of Roman Catholics, by the pious motive of benefiting the Church, strange it is, that none of the enemies of that Church, prior to the Reformation, should have objected, or even insinuated, that opinion through so many ages of either disguised or open hostility. Neither the Emperors in Germany, nor the Ghibellines in Italy, among all the reproaches, founded or unfounded, which they cast so liberally on the Popes, seem ever to have recollected, or even to have known, this execrable doctrine. They sometimes accuse the Popes of breach of promise, and even of oaths; but afford not the smallest

smallest grounds for a suspicion, that either the Pontifs or their party considered such actions in any other light than as criminal.

Every source of the most authentic information may be consulted; sermons, catechisms, pastoral charges, creeds and canons of councils; yet vain will be the most diligent search for even the shadow of a proof of this pretended faithlessness of Papists. What can be more extraordinary than that a society of such extent and antiquity, as is the Church of Rome, should maintain a doctrine of which no vestige can be traced in the above-mentioned authorities?—It would seem that the Papists too had their *mysteries*, as well as the ancients: and surely Dr. Middleton ought to have remarked this circumstance, among so many others, of a fortunate resemblance between ancient Paganism and modern Popery: he might then have added to his celebrated letter, a few more pages of misapplied ingenuity, and impertinent erudition. I said that the execrable doctrine imputed to Catholics cannot be discovered either in the writings of their divines, or in the instruction of their catechists. This however is not all. Near a century ago the Protestant author of *An Essay towards Catholic Communion*, did that justice to the Romish casuists, to assert, what any inquirer will find true, that they have ever maintained a contrary doctrine, which is, that oaths and promises are to be esteemed sacred and inviolable, whether they be made to Catholics, Heretics, Jews, or Pagans. In a matter of such general consent and perfect unanimity, it is unnecessary to cite the evidence of particulars*.

If

* The Council of Trent, which, it is well known, is of the highest authority with all Papists, offered [sess. 15.] to Protestants a safe-conduct, under protection of which they might safely come to, and return from, the city of Trent; and upon him who should dare

If the faithlessness of Papists towards persons of a different persuasion, appears neither in the ordinary conduct of individuals, nor in the discourses of the clergy from the pulpit; it is equally impossible to trace it in their behaviour as a body. On the contrary, this exhibits their fidelity in the strongest light, and serves to complete what I think an invincible demonstration of Roman Catholic honour and principle. It is notorious that in England this people has, through a period of more than two hundred years, been subjected to many severe penalties for adhering to the Romish communion. It is equally notorious, that, by realizing the supposition of Protestants, and by reducing to practice that system of perfidy which it is said to maintain, this people might formerly, and may at present, elude the operation of such penalties: yet Roman Catholics have continued uniformly resolute in refusing those oaths, by which, if taken, they might have acquired the favour of their governors. The interest of individuals, as well as the honour of the body, must, in the space of so long a time, have induced them to embrace every measure for their deliverance, which might be adopted without guilt or remorse.

It is not in the nature of man, voluntarily to relinquish those advantages of which Roman Catholics deprive themselves, while it is in his power to enjoy them. And is it not in the power of Catholics to enjoy them, if they are only prevented from it by oaths which, being tendered by heretics, they are taught to believe are not obligatory?—This argument, drawn from the conduct

dare to infringe it in any point whatever, the Council promised to inflict those penalties “which they incur, who violate such engagements, by the law both of God and man.” Do not, therefore, the Bishops at Trent acknowledge by these words the obligation of themselves and of all Catholics to keep faith with Protestants?

duct of Roman Catholics, admits no reply. It must appear conclusive, in spite of either the subtlety of the sophist, or the reason of the philosopher; and it precludes that last subterfuge of caviling polemics, that Papists, however honest on other occasions, are instructed always to sacrifice their honesty to their bigotry, when *the interest of the body* requires it: for it will not be denied that, to escape from the pressure of legal severities, by taking the oaths prescribed, would be highly advantageous to the body of English Catholics; yet the prospect of such desirable relief has never shaken their integrity; nor has the most galling oppression provoked them at any time to seek revenge on their oppressors, by affording them the insecure pledge of faithless oaths.

I could wish not to hear of the Council of Constance and of the unfortunate Hus; not because the argument drawn from the conduct of that assembly is in any degree formidable, but that it is unpleasant to say again what has been already said a thousand times: yet to arguments founded on a misstatement of facts, there is only one reply, to deny the premises, and of course reject the conclusion. I must therefore deny, first, that either Sigismund, or the Prelates at Constance, violated their engagements with John Hus for the security of his person: and, 2dly, I deny that the lawfulness of breaking such engagements, on pretence of being contracted with heretics, was proclaimed in the Council of Constance.

It is confessed that Sigismund granted a *safe-conduct* to the Bohemian Divine, and that, notwithstanding this, he afterwards ordered him to be burned for heresy. But what was the effect, what was the benefit of a safe conduct? The Civilians answer, "to protect him to whom it was granted, against all illegal violence, but not to
" screen

"screen him from public justice*:" it was not a pardon, nor had it any reference to the issue of the trial. All this was known to Hus. At his execution he did not arraign either the Bishops by whom sentence was passed on him, nor the Emperor, by whom the punishment consequent to such sentence was inflicted of a breach of faith. And Luther, who, among the *articles* of his doctrine, condemned by Leo X., has written expressly concerning Hus†, though he be as prodigal of censure on the Bishops, as of panegyric on the Bohemian Reformer, yet is entirely silent relatively to any charge of perfidy against the enemies of the latter. Sigismund, therefore, violated no engagement with Hus, when he suffered the Imperial laws against heresy to be executed, in consequence of which Hus was condemned to the flames. The safe-conduct granted by the Emperor, afforded him protection against the illegal violence of individuals, but could not prevent either the declaration or execution of a judicial sentence.

As to the Bishops who composed the assembly at Constance, they instituted a canonical inquiry concerning the opinions of John Hus, and condemned them as heretical—himself also, for obstinately adhering to those opinions, they declared a heretic. That this proceeding of the Prelates was contrary to the safe-conduct granted by the Emperor, will hardly be said; since even they who were most interested to assert it, have not yet affirmed that a safe-conduct was any bar to a trial, but only to the punishment of the criminal.

In the 19th session, the Council declared, that
F though

* Myfingeri *Observationes* *Judicii Imperialis Camere*, Obs. 82. *SPECKHART*, *Centuria prima*, qq. *Juris*, Q. 1, § 18. This author cites many writers of his profession for the same opinion.

† Art. 23.

though a protection were granted by the Emperor to heretics, such grant ought not to be deemed a reason why the ecclesiastical court should not take cognizance of their opinions, and punish them if they appeared to persist in them. And it also declared, that the Prince from whom the safe-conduct had been obtained, "*having done all that he could on his part, to observe his engagement*, was under "no farther obligation." The rancour of polemics has extorted from these words, a direct and open avowal of the doctrine, that faith is not to be kept with heretics. Yet this inference, one would imagine, is sufficiently obviated by the Council requiring of him who has engaged to protect heretics by his royal authority, that he should do every thing in his power to perform his engagement. Such an injunction it is impossible to reconcile with the doctrine just mentioned. It ought also to be observed, that the Council only then declares a prince released from the obligation of discharging his promise of protection made to heretics, when it has been made by him "to the prejudice of the Catholic "faith, or of ecclesiastical jurisdiction." To me, therefore, it seems to have been the principal intent of the above declaration, to establish the independance of Church-men on the civil power, in the business of suppressing religious innovations: and, because by granting safe-conducts the Prince might impede the course of canonical proceedings, the Council affirms in this celebrated decree, that Princes shall not be held by any promise made to screen heretical convicts from ecclesiastical prosecution, such promise being prejudicial to the faith and church, and therefore not binding. Whether the defence of reputed heretics, against ecclesiastical censures, was really prejudicial to the faith, and whether the Council of Constance was anxious for a privilege to which the

the Church had an indisputable claim, is at present an unnecessary inquiry. That Council released Princes from their engagements to protect heretics against the church, because it judged such protection *prejudicial to the faith, and to ecclesiastical jurisdiction*; and not because it deemed it unlawful to keep faith with heretics.

If any doubt still remain concerning the sense of the decree above cited, a decisive comment on it may be found in one of the queries enjoined by the same Council of Constance, to be proposed to all persons of suspected orthodoxy *. The query is, "Whether they believe wilful perjury, committed for whatever reason, though for the preservation of our own or another's life, of our country, or *even in favour of the faith*, be a grievous sin?" The laws of just criticism require, that passages of doubtful meaning in an author be explained conformably to others, of which the sense is clear and unambiguous. Now from the query it is evident that, in the opinion of the Bishops at Constance, perjury is unlawful, though it be committed for the benefit of the church, or for any other cause whatever. The inference therefore is plain, that the above mentioned decree of the Prelates does not contain that execrable doctrine, which some have pretended to discover in it, of the lawfulness of breaking faith with heretics.

It must be owned, that, though of the former accusations alledged against Roman Catholics, almost every one has been shewn to affect the credit of Protestantism, as well as of Popery, yet from the last we might have expected to find Protestants entirely clear. The origin of the Reformation, made in opposition to every thing that

F 2

bore

* See Pope Martin's bull in the 45th and last session of the Council of Constance.

bore the name of Church throughout Europe, naturally leads us to suppose its votaries would not at first look on heresy with the most violent emotions of horror. The apparent, if not real, difficulty of wiping away from themselves the stain of heresy, rendered them, not without reason, extremely cautious in fastening that odious charge upon dissenters. It was not till a century had passed from the change of religion, that the rulers of the national Church ventured to insert in the Litany a petition to be delivered from heresy. But when time had thrown a veil over the Reformation, which concealed its novelty from the eyes of the vulgar, then the heads of Protestant establishments began to discover the perverseness, and to declaim, with more zeal perhaps than consistency, against the obstinate indocility of heretics. Among these, the Papists, being the most ancient and most incorrigible of heretics, could not fail to be the most obnoxious. A Protestant Bishop was heard to declare, in the most unequivocal language, from the pulpit, that faith was not to be kept with Papists. Nor was this doctrine of the Bishop of Meath without effect: the articles of Limerick were impudently violated, and the violation of them was advised and encouraged by the perfidious tongue of a Protestant Prelate*.

At the latter end of the reign of Charles II, when Papists were arraigned for a plot, of which they were almost instantly acquitted by their very enemies, such scenes of perfidy and injustice were exhibited by the government of this country as ought to silence for ever the cry of Englishmen against Popery for faithlessness to heretics. The multiplied

* " Doctor Dopping, Bishop of Meath, preaching before the justices at Dublin, argued that the peace ought not to be observed with a people so perfidious" [as Catholics]. Harris's Life of King William, f. 353.

multiplied perjuries of Oates, Dagdale, Bedloe, and Dangerfield, were encouraged, were solicited, and even welcomed, in the courts of justice, as legal evidence for shedding the blood of innocent men †. Of the latter, the innocence was so shortly after discovered, and so universally acknowledged throughout the nation, that it seems impossible it should have been unknown to their prosecutors and judges †. On what principle then are we to account for the admission and encouragement of such perjured evidence, except that it was esteemed not unlawful to employ even perjury itself against the execrated Papist? That some such principle was assumed, may be inferred, not only from what has been already mentioned, but also from the words of the Lord Chief Justice, by whom the Papists had the ill fortune to be tried, in his address to the jury: "They have not the principles," said his Lordship, "which we have; therefore they are not to have that common credence which our principles and practices call for. They are not to wonder, if they keep no faith, that they have none from others*."

We have hitherto contemplated Popery in a religious rather than a political view; more as a system of belief and practice, than as an ecclesiastical establishment; in short, as a subject rather for the moralist than for the magistrate. - If its tendency be not unfriendly to the duties of morality and of civil society, let the veil be at last withdrawn that has long concealed its genuine tenets

† Hume's History of England, Vol. VIII. p. 90, 98.

‡ "We may conclude from such impatience of contradiction, that the prosecutors themselves retained a secret suspicion, that the belief of a plot was but ill grounded. The politicians among them were afraid to let in light, lest it might put an end to so useful a delusion." Hume, Vol. VIII. p. 99.

* Trial of Ireland, Pickering, and Grove, 1678, edit. fol. p. 74. 5.

tenets from the public eye; let it be cleared from the imputation of fictitious tenets; and let it be viewed with the same tolerant sentiments, which we would be thought to entertain concerning the religious systems of every Christian denomination. The friends of our establishment are the more interested in abating their prejudices against Roman Catholics, as there are really few, very few points of disagreement between them, which they cannot justify by the example and authority of Protestants. The justice of this observation must have frequently suggested itself already in the preceding pages of this inquiry; and it will appear still more conspicuous, if it be considered that, among the reproaches made by dissenters to the established Church, from the days of Elizabeth, one has ever been the resemblance of the establishment to the Church of Rome. Whatever be the weight or justice of this accusation, it is highly unbecoming the wisdom of a Protestant legislature, and the liberality of an enlightened people, to treat with distinguished severity those religionists, of whom the morality is at least as pure as of other sects tolerated by law. What though it be pretended, that Popery is full of corruptions, errors, and absurdities? Such a pretence may indeed kindle the zeal of a controversialist; but it ought not to rouse the indignation, or arm the vengeance of the magistrate. Here many, I am aware, will reply, "It is not the religion of Papists, it is their politics which we dread *." Their acknowledgement of a foreign dominion and usurpation, the enterprising and ambitious spirit of their clergy, their lofty ideas and arbitrary doctrines on the subject of government; and
 "lastly,

* Blackstone's Commentaries, Dean Tucker, Dr. Porteus, p. 85. Brief Confutation, 1781.

“lastly, the restless and turbulent conduct of
 “Roman Catholics towards Protestant gover-
 “nors; these, they exclaim, are the motives of
 “our jealousy and apprehensions: against these
 “we have been forced to guard by penal laws.”

That Roman Catholics acknow- *Acknowledgment of*
 ledge a foreign dominion, it may *a foreign dominion.*
 appear effrontery in me to deny, if the number of
 those be considered who have affirmed it. I do
 however deny it, and am convinced that a charge
 so invidious could never have gained credit for a
 moment, without a most impudent misrepresen-
 tation of the Roman Catholic doctrine concern-
 ing the Papal prerogative†. For this end, all
 the low arts of controversy, from the barefaced
 lie to the more subtle perversion of language from
 its ordinary meaning, have been employed. The
 acknowledgment of a purely *spiritual* jurisdiction
 in a foreign Bishop, has been called a submission
 to foreign dominion. Roman Catholics do in-
 deed attribute to the Bishop of Rome some degree
 of

† I say the Roman Catholic *doctrine*, not the opinions of Ro-
 mish divines, on this subject. Of these, many at the time of the
 Reformation, and long after, ascribed to the Pope a real foreign
 dominion, that of deposing Princes in cases of heresy and apostacy.
 But that opinion, which has been long obsolete, was never consid-
 ered as one of the necessary terms of Catholic communion, or as
 a test of Romish orthodoxy. Though, out of France, they who
 affirmed the deposing power were very, perhaps most numerous,
 yet there were never wanting among Catholics, opposers of a
 doctrine entirely repugnant to the dignity and sovereignty of kings.
 At this time, it would be as difficult to find among Catholics an
 apologist for the deposing power of the Pope, as it would be to
 find among Protestants an abettor of the doctrine, that dominion is
 founded on grace. Formerly, both opinions had their followers,
 not only in theory, but in practice. It is a folly, therefore, or ra-
 ther it is an injustice, to confound the opinions of Roman Catho-
 lics with the articles of Roman Catholic belief, and to make the
 whole body of Catholics responsible for the absurdities of their
 schoolmen. On such principles, the Church of England, and every
 Protestant Church, would have much to answer for.

of authority, not however in temporal matters, over the rest of Christian Prelates. By that authority he can neither molest the persons, nor invade the property, of those who are subject to him. In respect of both of these, every Catholic Prelate is wholly independent on the Pope; and if independent on the Pope in that which constitutes the twofold object of dominion, how can he be said to be subject to a foreign dominion? But to have stated in this light the sentiment of Catholics concerning the Papal primacy, would have never answered the views of their enemies, as it would never have interested the passions of the multitude. For this purpose, submission to the spiritual jurisdiction of a foreign Bishop, was construed into a transfer of civil allegiance to him; and by the officious substitution of expressions more obnoxious than what were used by Catholics, this people was brought in guilty of abetting foreign power and usurpation. By a Sophistry equally disingenuous and contemptible, by calling that *adoration* which should be expressed by the more qualified term *veneration*, or *respect*, it has been attempted to prove, that the Papist who honours the departed spirits of virtuous men, is as blind and as criminal as the Pagan who bows down before his idol to adore it*. It is painful to observe in human nature so much illiberality mingled with so much animosity; and still more melancholy, to discover these shades in some of the most enlightened characters of this country.

After these complaints of the injustice of anti-papist writers, in misstating the tenet of Papal supremacy,

* Brief Confutation of the Errors of Popery, p. 23. 4. 5. by Dr. Porteus, Lord Bishop of Chester. Is it thus his Lordship exemplifies the precept of St. Paul to a Christian Bishop? "Do the work of an Evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." 2 Tim. iv. v. 5.

premacý, it will be expected that I shall state the Roman Catholic belief on this point with greater fidelity. This I will readily do, after assuring the reader that he need not fear being involved in a labyrinth of controversy, though on a subject on which so many hundred volumes have been written. From this

Gulf profound, as that Serbonian bog,
Where armies whole have sunk,*

I wish to keep clear; solely intending to review the Popish doctrine, not as conformable to Revelation, but as connected with the political interests of nations.

The Author of Christianity neither exercised himself, nor imparted to his followers, any degree of earthly dominion. The Apostle therefore, from whom the Bishops of Rome claim their supremacy, having received from his Master nothing more than spiritual jurisdiction, these cannot pretend to inherit from their apostolical predecessor those powers which he never possessed. Conformably to these principles, the present race of Catholics, whatever may have been the opinions of their ancestors, allows not to the Pope any authority which may interfere with the exercise of the civil power. They bow with conscientious submission to the civil as well as spiritual jurisdiction, and maintain the respective independence of each, in the execution of those ordinances, the enforcement of those sanctions, and the discharge of those offices, which have been committed by Heaven to either their political or ecclesiastical rulers. They openly profess obedience to the laws of the land, from which they affirm that no Papal dispensation can absolve them. In short, they reject all the antiquated claims of ambitious

* Paradise Lost, b. ii. v. 592.

bitious Pontiffs, to either a direct or indirect dominion in temporals *.

“ But while they acknowledge a foreign power superior to the sovereignty of the kingdom, they cannot complain if the laws of that kingdom will not treat them on the footing of good subjects †.” A foreign power ! Who would imagine that the enlightened author of *Commentaries on the Laws of England* would have descended to so pitiful an *équivoque*, and sheltering himself under that *équivoque*, would have insinuated a charge, which by fair and manly arguments he knew it was impossible to support ? If there be any force in the above cited words, to prove what the author intended, it is necessary, that by a *foreign power* we should understand a power vested in some foreigner over the fortunes or persons of his Majesty’s subjects. And is then a foreign power of this description acknowledged by Roman Catholics ? For an answer, I refer to the oath of allegiance tendered to Roman Catholics in 1787 ; I refer to the courts in which that test has been subscribed by all the nobility, gentry, and clergy of that profession, who have unanimously and solemnly disavowed the foreign power which Judge Blackstone tells us they all acknowledge. As I mean not to war with the dead,

* It will be vain to look for these ideas of a distinction between the Church and State, in the dusty tomes of schoolmen and casuists : these were in general prepossessed with all the prejudices of their age in favour of the Court of Rome, and were themselves more immediately subjected to its tyranny. Yet that the independence of crowned heads was known and maintained even in the darkest ages, is apparent from the annals of our own country, from those of France, and of the Empire. I do not pretend that this sentiment was entertained so universally as at this day ; that it influenced every measure which was agitated, or determined every difference which arose between the Church and the State. I only assert, that the sentiment was not unknown, and that it was not proscribed by the religion of the times.

† Blackstone, b. iv. c. 4.

dead, it is unnecessary to examine here, whether it was ignorance or a worse motive that influenced the Judge, in a charge at once so pointed and so ill founded. It is more material to observe how violent, how rooted, and how prevalent must be the animosity of this nation against Papists, when one of the first characters in it, both as a scholar and a magistrate, was so little free from it as we have just seen.

The authority of the Pope, whatever be its extent, being wholly spiritual, both in its origin and its use, can never disconcert the counsels, or obstruct the operations, of the Sovereign. The Prince and the Pontiff have distinct jurisdictions, distinct objects in view ; and, to attain these, have recourse to different methods. The primacy of the Pope, therefore, cannot be superior to the sovereignty of the kingdom ; nor can the acknowledgment of it, without a most extraordinary figure in language, be construed into a submission to foreign *dominion*. For, after all, in what does this primacy consist ? If we consider the original tenure of it, prior to the concessions made in its favour both by Church and State, we shall find it to consist, not in any one individual act of spiritual jurisdiction, which another prelate may not exercise in particular circumstances ; but in that special obligation, by which the Pope is bound in strict justice, and *ex officio*, above other Bishops, to maintain the purity of religious doctrine, and the observance of general discipline throughout the Christian Church. Now the episcopal prerogative of maintaining faith and discipline, which, exercised throughout Christendom, constitutes the Papal supremacy, is, I suspect, asserted by our own Prelates within their respective districts, as independent on the Crown. I am sure it has been
asserted

asserted by their predecessors* : and in Scotland it is notorious, that the Kirk has ever protested its independence on the magistrate in ecclesiastical matters. How therefore the foreign claim of a spiritual jurisdiction, which is actually exercised with independence on the Prince by his own subjects, can affect the sovereignty of the kingdom, or degrade the majesty of the throne, is what I am unable to comprehend.

But it may be pretended, that Roman Catholics are obnoxious to government for denying the ecclesiastical supremacy of the King. If, by the regal supremacy, we understand that unlimited power over the Church, which was conferred on Henry, Edward, and Elizabeth, by their respective Parliaments, and which constitutes the Prince the fountain of all ecclesiastical jurisdiction, and authorises him "to reform, order, &c. all such errors, heresies, &c. which by any spiritual authority may lawfully be reformed," it is true, Roman Catholics do not acknowledge such a supremacy. They attribute to the King the utmost extent of temporal power which the constitution allows him ; but the origin and exercise of spiritual power, they believe to reside exclusively in that order of men which is distinguished by the name of *Clergy*. Whether to maintain this be a *wicked error* †, which it certainly is in England ; or whether it be not, as it certainly is not out of England ; is by no means the question. What I contend for at present is, that this error is perfectly harmless in a political point of view. It neither questions nor impugns his Majesty's right to the whole executive power,

* Archbishop Wake, cited by Collier, Vol. II. Eccles. Hist. p. 89. Bishop Stillingfleet. Ecclesiastical Cases, p. 327. Bishop Andrews against Bellarmine, p. 367 ; with all the Prelates of that and the following reign.

† See the second Canon, 1603.

er, and to his constitutional share of the legislative authority in these kingdoms. It opposes not his claim to the honour of being the first magistrate of the people, nor does it tend to deprive him of any of those advantages which contribute to the authority and grandeur of monarchs. The end and benefit of government are, to secure the persons and property of those who live under it from the attacks of violence and ambition: for this purpose men have associated together, have submitted to the control of law, and surrendered their private rights for the enjoyment of public justice and security. To these views of society, and the means of attaining them, I am unable to discover what obstruction arises from a denial of the ecclesiastical supremacy of Kings. If Roman Catholics denied to the Prince any prerogative, by which he might be enabled more effectually to discharge the duties of royalty, in this supposition they ought to be compelled to relinquish a doctrine inconsistent with civil allegiance. But this cannot be pretended, unless it be thought that obedience to the laws can only be enforced by excommunication, and other acts of spiritual jurisdiction. Few will doubt, whether Henry VII. without the aid of a spiritual supremacy, found himself less enabled to afford protection to his subjects, or to maintain public tranquillity and order, than his son Henry VIII. and Elizabeth, invested, as these were, with the awful character of *Head of the Church of England*.

It must not be imagined, that the guilt of refusing to acknowledge the King's supremacy, as expressed in Acts of Parliament, has been always confined to those of the Romish persuasion. The arrogant assumption of this singular prerogative was no sooner known to the world, than it excited either the indignation or astonishment of every

every Protestant out of England : all the disciples of Luther and Calvin were highly dissatisfied with this unprecedented regulation of the English Church, or rather of the English Parliament. Even of the English Protestants themselves, some of considerable reputation, besides the whole numerous sect of Puritans, refused the oath of supremacy at the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign *. A doctrine so extraordinary, a doctrine blasphemous and sacrilegious, to use the epithets applied to it by an eminent reformer †, could never have originated but in the impetuous passions of Henry, and the ductile servility of Cramer ; nor could the pious views of the Prince and Primate fail to be seconded by the flattery of a Parliament, of which both the political and religious creed seems to have been borrowed from the school of the Florentine philosopher.

But whatever might be the origin of Henry's pretension, and that of his successors, to ecclesiastical supremacy, this is certain, that such pretension was admitted by none but by their own subjects. Other Princes, besides Henry and his children, embraced the religion of Protestants; but of these, none assumed the title of *Head of the Church*. Neither the ambition of kings, nor the flattery of their ministers, produced any thing in that age similar to this extravagance of our countrymen : among all the reformed, they alone had the sagacity to discover, the credulity to believe, and the confidence to swear, that kings are competent to " reform all heresies and errors, and " to act as judges in all ecclesiastical causes." In rejecting the doctrines of Protestants, a Papist may be encouraged by the countenance of his own

* Preface to Dr Stapleton's Reply to the Bishop of Winchester concerning the Oath, 1567. Neale's History of the Puritans.

† Calvin in Ainos, c. vii.

own sectaries : for rejecting the King's supremacy, he has the additional authority of every reformed church but that of England.

They who observe the more moderate sentiments of the present day concerning the ecclesiastical power of our Kings, will be persuaded with difficulty that a serious claim to spiritual jurisdiction was really made by their predecessors. Let such, if such there be, only look into the statute book *; let them only consult the history of those times, and they will see, if any comment be wanted on the statutes of Henry, Edward, and Elizabeth, whether it may not be best found in the conduct of these Princes in church affairs. I say then, that the power attributed to the above-mentioned Princes by their respective Parliaments, was strictly spiritual, and the source from which all spiritual power, to be exercised in the nation, was derived. Extraordinary as that grant appears to us, and almost incredible; yet, whether we consider the probable intention of those who made it, or the obvious meaning of the terms in which it was made, the evidence of such a grant is incontestible. By it, the Church, which had long triumphed over the State, was completely subjected to the temporal power: its canons were exchanged for statutes, its mixed government was converted into despotism, and its ministers held their jurisdiction by the same precarious tenure by which the justices held their commissions for the peace. Religion was degraded into state-policy; and that constitution of Church and State, which the author of *The Leviathan* † has since ingeniously delineated and elaborately extolled, then subsisted in reality.

That

* 24 Hen. VIII. c. xii. & xix. 25 Hen. VIII. c. xxi. 37 Hen. VIII. c. xvii. 1 Ed. VI. c. ii. 1 Eliz. c. i.

† *Leviathan*, Part III. c. 42.

That the clergy of Henry and Edward concurred in these wild notions of the Court and Parliament, cannot be doubted. It may however be questioned, whether the monstrous doctrine of a lay supremacy survived long the oath enacted to support it in the first year of Elizabeth. Its absurdity was so manifest, that even the impudence of those times blushed at it. Early in the reign of that princess, and during its progress, an attentive observer will remark symptoms in the clergy, of a disposition to claim certain spiritual powers †, independently of their *supreme Governness, in all ecclesiastical things or causes*. Under the reign of James I, and that of his son, the hierarchy was in its glory; and during that period, both the language and sentiments of churchmen were little consistent with either the oaths or the statutes enacted under the three first Protestant Princes, on the subject of supremacy. The divine rights of Bishops, which then came into fashion, was alone subversive of that transcendent and supreme power in spiritual matters, which it was the avowed object of former legislatures to establish. This divine right, which inferred the independence of Bishops on the King in spiritual concerns, was denied by few, if by any, of those who affected to appear orthodox. These explained the King's supremacy as consisting in the government of all ecclesiastical persons within his Majesty's dominions, in the execution of the ecclesiastical canons, and in the protection and support of the ecclesiastical establishment.

The regal supremacy, thus explained and understood,

† Answer to the Declaration of my Lord Abbot of Westminster, by Dr. Horn, Bishop of Winchester, 1564, f. 96, 108. Dr. Haddon's Letter to Osona, Bishop of Sylvez in Portugal, 1563. Archbishop Parker's Exposition of the 37th Article, 1562, and his addition to the beginning of the 20th Article, 1571, are all proofs of this assertion.

derstood, was acknowledged by the Puritans. These sectaries, satisfied with the comment of Archbishop Parker on the 37th Article, and with the injunctions of Elizabeth, scrupled not to take the oath of supremacy in a meaning which the words certainly seemed to exclude. In this qualified sense, Roman Catholics also admit the King's supremacy*, although they have never taken the oath prescribed by law: for, as the form of that oath first appeared, it contained such doctrine as even Protestants turned aside from with disgust. It might indeed express one meaning, and be subscribed in another: but, notwithstanding on one hand the example of the Puritans, and on the other the supposed disregard of oaths made to heretics, Roman Catholics have never consented to subscribe an oath in a sense contradictory to that which the words exhibit in their obvious acceptation. Moreover, the oath implied, and still continues to imply, a denial of that spiritual jurisdiction over the Christian Church which all Catholics maintain to be vested in the Bishop of Rome. For these reasons they have uniformly refused the oaths of supremacy. Yet were an oath so framed as to express the King's ecclesiastical prerogative, in the manner in which it is defined in the appendix to the 37th Article, I think I could pledge myself for it being subscribed by every Catholic in England.

A passionate charge is seldom consistent. The same voice, which proclaims the ambitious and enterprising spirit of Romish churchmen, informs

Ambitious and enterprising spirit of the Clergy.

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* Abbot Fekenham, at the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth, offered to the Bishop of Winchester to take an oath expressive of the Queen's title to supreme government of this realm, and all her Highness's dominions, and of her sovereignty over all persons born within the realm, whether ecclesiastics or laymen.—Stapleton's Reply, as cited above, p. 14.

us also, in the same breath, that they are slaves to a foreign Pontif, to whom they pay a submission little less than abject servility. In this instance, as in many others, the violence of the accusers is more remarkable than their consistency; and renders their evidence suspicious or incredible. I do not deny that the Romish clergy is ambitious. Ambition is a principle inherent in our nature; but that this passion is either the effect of religion in a Popish clergyman, or that it burns more fiercely in his breast than in that of another man, this I deny. Among all the calumnies forged in this land of liberality against Papists, I have not yet discovered any that directly charges their religion with encouraging men to become ambitious. It is not Popery, then, which kindles ambition in its ministers; it is passion; and this being a principle common to all, we are not authorised to confine the reproach of ambition to any particular body of men.

But it will be asked, Did not the clergy of the Church of Rome, previous to the Reformation, attain to a most exorbitant dominion over all ranks and conditions of men; a dominion repugnant to the moderation of its profession, and to the rights of sovereign princes? I confess that it did. Yet, granting this, I admit not the conclusion, which is, that Roman Catholic churchmen are more distinguished by a spirit of ambition and enterprise than the rest of men. It should be remembered that Papists have subsisted during a much longer period than Christians of any other denomination. Popery, in the annals of its establishment, comprehends many of the most important revolutions in the history of mankind; the fall of the Western Empire, the origin of the feudal institutions, the wild projects of the crusaders, and the universal spread of ignorance and barbarism over Europe. In all these events the Church of Rome was deeply interested. It has stood there-
fore

fore in more complicated relations to the civil power, than any other religious system of the present time. Where then is the wonder, if, in the course of an establishment above four times more ancient than that of the Reformation, its hierarchy should have been so fortunately circumstanced, as to gain an ascendant over the other orders of society? In the perpetual fluctuation of ancient governments, we observe sometimes the prince, sometimes the nobles, and at other times the people, preponderate in the scale of power. It is not therefore extraordinary, that, in a succession of ages, the Clergy should find itself so situated in regard of the State, as to be able to incline the balance in favour of the Church. Surely that is a surly, cynical philosophy, which accounts for events by ascribing them to causes, not the most probable, but the most criminal, and which allows men no means of becoming successful, but such as are connected with vice. Men are vicious enough in reality: for the honour then of human nature, let us not imagine them more guilty than they actually are.

The exaltation of the Romish clergy to that high degree of grandeur and dominion which it possessed in the middle ages, is a singular phænomenon in history. The principal causes of that exaltation, originated in the state of society and polity * in Europe, and not in

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* It is beyond a doubt, that the feudal government was highly favourable to the aggrandizement of the clergy. First, The heads of both secular and regular clergy were Barons, and from their numerous fiefs derived all that consequence and respectability which arise from extensive landed property. Secondly, The Church, in those times of universal rapine and devastation, was, by its immunities, secured in the peaceable enjoyment of its possessions. That security it extended to its vassals, and also to many others, who surrendered their lands, and even their persons, into the hands of the Church, that they might be safe under the shadow of its privileges.

the influence of the established religion. Should these causes, which God forbid, exist again, in the same extent, I doubt not but that the same effects would again become visible, whatever might then be the system of religion supported by law. Where things are so constituted, that on one side is ignorance without instruction or education, and on the other is sound learning and capacity for business, there the latter will infallibly command respect and esteem, with all the advantages which these commonly afford. Ignorance and inexperience, in the revolution of human affairs, will always be overmatched by knowledge and ability; and in every contest, the latter are found to acquire an ascendant over the former*. It was the misfortune of the middle ages, that in them none but clergymen were fitted by their education for the management of any business, except war. These the government was necessitated to employ on all occasions, where address or information was required. From them ambassadors were appointed to conduct

vilages. Thirdly, Under the feudal policy, the prerogative of kings was so much circumscribed, that they could neither protect the innocent, nor punish the guilty. Many, therefore, of their subjects sought protection from the Church; and naturally enough transferred to it some portion of that allegiance which they owed to the crown. Fourthly, The king and the nobility considered each other, with some reason, as hostile and rival powers. Each solicited the favour and interest of the Church against its enemy; and, from this situation, it was impossible that the Church should not acquire a considerable degree of political influence. Fifthly, Under the feudal anarchy, none but clergymen enjoying personal security, they alone had an opportunity to cultivate the arts. Their superiority to the rest of the community, in this particular, must have rendered them frequently necessary to the court, and must have procured them all that distinction which is paid to the learned in a barbarous age.

O impotence of mind, in body strong!

But what is strength without a double share

Of wisdom? not made to rule,

But to subserve, where wisdom bears command. MILTON

dust almost every negotiation of importance. In that feebleness of a feudal administration, where the king was controlled by the combination of a formidable aristocracy ever jealous of his prerogative, the clergy must have been possessed of powerful interest; nor would the Court be unwilling to purchase the direction of it, by liberal grants of honours and privileges. The nobility, conscious of inferiority in point of literary and scientific acquirements, and also of political ability, looked up to churchmen with a high degree of veneration. To these, they were indebted for the education of their children; all the learning of the times, however inconsiderable, being wholly confined to churchmen. The people derived from the clergy, not only the benefits of religion, but also in some degree the comforts of society, as far as these depended on public tranquillity. Both by profession and interest, the clergy was led to discourage all wars, as well public, between sovereign princes, as private, between the nobles. With this view, it forbade, in many Councils, all war-like operations to be carried on at certain seasons of the year; and with the same laudable design, it established the celebrated *truce of God*. The Prelates not only endeavoured to prevent the frequency of wars, but also to soften the rigours and sooth the ferocity of conquest. They recommended or enjoined the manumission of slaves; and, on many occasions, they sold the plate belonging to their churches, to procure the liberty of captives. The privilege of asylum, annexed to many churches, though at last flagrantly abused, was originally intended to afford protection to the weak and defenceless, against the violence of the times. Even some of the encroachments of the episcopal order on the civil power, appear to have originated in zealous and well-

well-meant efforts to obtain or establish tranquillity by means, it must be owned, not perfectly consistent with the independence of temporal princes. In the revenues of every church, a part was allotted for the relief of the poor, and was distributed among them by the clergy. Hospitals, for the reception of the aged and infirm, were commonly erected by churchmen, and were always under the inspection and government of that order. It is not wonderful that they who contributed by different ways to the good of the community, should have obtained from it respect and esteem. And if to these considerations we add the benefits derived from the clergy by instruction, by pleading in the courts of justice, by the practice of physic, by the tuition of youth, and by the discharge of the first offices of state, in all which they were either solely or principally employed; it must be obvious, that an order of men so extensively useful to society, would acquire no inconsiderable share of influence over it. When government answers not the end for which it was instituted, the enjoyment of peace, and the protection of property, little reverence or submission will be shown to it: and if these advantages be obtained, either wholly or in part, from another body of men, the attachment to government will be loosened, and transferred to that body, as a reward of the benefits dispensed by it. The aggrandisement therefore of the clergy, must be attributed to the weakness of the magistrate, the turbulence of the nobility, the peculiar advantages of churchmen, advantages that arose from the calamity of the times, rather than to I know not what imaginary ambition, of which the existence is without proof, and the success without example.

The ignorance of the age also operated in another manner towards the preponderance of ecclesiastical

clerical power: it not only prevented the discovery of many errors and prejudices in the minds of men, but gave authority to those prejudices, by establishing the credit of the very sources of them. These were the *Decretals* and the *Decree* of Gratian. Both encouraged Popes to invade the rights of bishops, and both authorised the encroachments of churchmen on the prerogative of princes. That the reason of men should have been so unenlightened, as not to discern the essential and important claim of sovereigns to the dependence of every member of the community, is the most convincing proof that can be desired of the darkness of that age. Of men so benighted, and so little acquainted with the first principles of civil policy, it cannot be expected they should have been critics sufficient to discover the forgery of the spurious decretals.

Superstition, the offspring of ignorance and barbarism, concurred with the above-mentioned causes to impress the people with a greater degree of submission to the priesthood, than religion either requires or approves. Among a barbarous people, the priest is always an object of particular veneration. Besides the authority which he commands as a minister of religion, he is also distinguished by all that respect and reverence which superstition never fails to create and attribute to the priestly order. Tacitus informs us, that the ancient Germans paid great deference to their priests; and that by these the order of the national assembly was regulated*. It is not wonderful that our ancestors, descended from the very people of whom Tacitus speaks, should, after their conversion to Christianity, continue to treat their priests with singular veneration, and

* Tac. de Moribus Germanorum, § 7 and 11.

and allow them a place in the great assembly of the nation. On such occasions, their superior acquirements in literature, their education and capacity for business, could not fail to command both respect and interest from those who were destitute of these improvements: nor must it be omitted, that, besides the operation of all these general causes, there were many *accidental* circumstances which contributed to the exaltation of the clergy in particular States. These might be easily pointed out by the historian.

Thus, from the collected efficacy of so many different causes, or rather from the diversified effects of a single cause, I mean *ignorance*, we are enabled to account for that mighty ascendant which the clergy gained, during the dark ages, over all ranks of men. Nor will the philosopher, from this view of things, be inclined to reproach the Romish clergy of these days, with any dangerous spirit of enterprise or ambition. The clergy of the reformed churches, had it then existed, would, with the same advantages, have arrived at the same degree of spiritual domination:—that it has not, is owing more to the general spread of knowledge among us, than to any superiority over the ancient clergy, in point of humility or moderation.

It is therefore idle to affect to discover, in the profound policy of churchmen, the source of that exorbitant greatness at which they arrived in the middle ages. Nothing but religious prejudices of a most malignant kind could have so far blinded the reason of men, in this age of boasted philosophy, as to prevent them from discovering the true cause of this singular event. No deep-laid scheme of policy has yet been judged necessary to explain the formidable powers of the feudal Barons, the rise and progress of the prerogative of Kings, with the triumph of the latter

latter over the numerous and valuable privileges of the Nobles. In the investigation of these important facts, we can exert a sagacity, almost bordering on refinement, to mark the natural operation of circumstances peculiar to the manners of the times: but, in accounting for the exaltation of the clergy in the ages of ignorance and barbarism, we are unable to proceed without the assistance of a plot, in which the contrivance and success are equally inconceivable. Yet, were the reality of this imaginary plot allowed, nothing would be gained; for it will require all the credulity, even of the middle ages, to believe that a body of men, destitute of an armed force, should, by mere dint of political dexterity, wrest from monarchs a considerable part of their jurisdiction, and assert to themselves an absolute independence on them. Nothing but the blindest and most vulgar bigotry can listen with patience to such visionary theories.

It has frequently been objected to the Romish clergy, that its ambition is such as to aspire openly to an independence on the state, to disclaim the obligation of the laws, and refuse to contribute towards the exigencies of government.—I answer. If the Romish clergy has not declined the advantages which were offered to it; if it has not censured the laws of Justinian and other princes, as too favourable to churchmen; and if it has not always preferred the public good to the interest of its own order; it only follows, that it is like other men, or other bodies of men. A desire to obtain particular advantages to ourselves, is so natural to the mind of man, that its effects must be strongly felt in every society; and wherever numerous bodies of men are collected into distinct classes, whose common interest may be affected by particular laws and regulations, it has been found, that such classes of
men

men have in all ages been active in trying to obtain peculiar privileges to their own order, at the expence of all others in the community. The same page of history that records the multiplied exemptions of Romish ecclesiastics, has also recorded the indiscriminate facility of kings and nobles in granting them. Could it be expected that, when princes were weak enough to suffer the clergy to withdraw themselves from their temporal jurisdiction, and even to add the sanction of law to such immunity, the latter would be too disinterested to embrace so flattering a distinction? Men in general are nothing less than philosophers: they may applaud in theory the virtues of moderation and contentment; yet a regard for these will have little influence on their conduct, and will seldom restrain them from the pursuit of any considerable advantage. I speak of mankind at large, not of its individuals.

The enormous guilt therefore of the Romish clergy, in extending the authority of the spiritual courts beyond due bounds, amounts to no more than that the churchmen of that time did exactly what any other body of men would have done in the same circumstances; they only gathered the spontaneous fruits of the ignorance and superstition of the age. Had they excited wars, extinguished letters, or propagated that barbarism which overspread the face of Europe, they might with some colour of justice be reproached with the consequences of those evils: but he who is not an entire stranger to candour, will readily allow, that the clergy were the only people who either possessed themselves any degree of civility, or who endeavoured to diffuse it among others. It may then without prejudice be affirmed, that a Protestant clergy would have been equally ambitious, with the same motives
to

to inspire, and the same advantages to stimulate its ambition.

In the history of the reformed churches, I do not find the clergy to have been more moderate, whatever compliments it may have received from the partiality of friends for the merit of distinguished moderation *. The ecclesiastical commission, the right of sanctuary, the extension of prohibited degrees, and every abuse of the ancient establishment, might have remained to this day, if the removal of these had depended on the disinterestedness of the Protestant clergy. What was it but the clamour of this body which prevented the suppression of asylums till the reign of James I? † What other cause but this, obstructed the removal of many ecclesiastical abuses which have survived the ancient hierarchy. To form an idea of the *moderate ambition* of a Protestant clergy, we need only to observe what that moderation was, under the reign of Charles I. and the primacy of Archbishop Laud. A learned historian ‡ informs us, that “ while the Prelates
“ were so liberal in raising the Crown at the ex-
“ pence of public liberty, they made no scruple
“ of encroaching themselves on the royal rights
“ the most incontestable, in order to exalt the
“ hierarchy, and procure to their own order do-
“ minion and independence. All the doctrines
“ which

* Judge Blackstone has lavished very warm, but not very appropriate, praise on the conduct of the established clergy. His panegyric displays no uncommon or peculiar excellence, which either is not, or may not be, possessed by others, except one, “ that they pride themselves in nothing more justly, than in being true members of the Church emphatically *by law* established.”

† Pegge's Account of the Right of Sanctuary, Art. I. Archæologia, Vol VIII. 1787.

‡ Hume, Vol. VI. p. 293, and p. 38, speaking of the conduct of the Scotch ministers, says, “ Scarcely during the darkest night of Papal superstition, are there found such instances of priestly encroachments, as the annals of Scotland present to us during that period.”

“ which the Romish Church had borrowed from
 “ some of the Fathers, and which freed the spi-
 “ ritual from subordination to the civil power,
 “ were now adopted by the Church, and inter-
 “ woven with her political and religious tenets.”
 The proceedings of the General Assembly in Scot-
 land, about the same time, and the bold preten-
 sions of its ministers to independence on their
 Prince, shew that ambition is not the infirmity
 of Popish clergymen alone †. It is true, the lat-
 ter have attained to a greater degree of power
 than the Protestant churchmen have yet arrived
 at. This however is not a proof that the am-
 bition of Popish ecclesiastics was greater, but
 that the enterprises of a Protestant clergy have
 been less successful.

Where the nature and end of government are
 well understood, where the operations of that go-
 vernment are directed with a strong hand, and
 where the church is confined within the limits
 appointed by its founder, there the clergy, what-
 ever be its religion, will be compelled to yield
 obedience; and, whatever its ambition, will be
 never able to invade the prerogative of kings.
 Even they who proclaim loudest the encroach-
 ments of the Popish clergy, cannot deny it to
 have been uniformly obedient to their temporal
 rulers, through a succession of several ages. The
 Greek Prelates, while they professed the religion
 of Rome, seem never to have attempted any
 thing against the civil jurisdiction of the Em-
 perors*. Nor did such attempts occur to the
 Western ecclesiastics till about the tenth century.
 Then,

† This is evident from almost every page of a work of King
 Charles I. still extant, and entitled, *A large Declaration concerning
 the late Tumults in Scotland.* 1639.

* Puckeridge, Bishop of Rochester, b. i. c. 8. p. 170, of his
Apology for Barclay. Fleury, *Discours sur l'Histoire Eccle-
 siastique*, n. 15.

Then, indeed, the feeble government of princes, the ignorance of the laity, and consequently its incompetence to prescribe any useful or rational forms of justice, with the advantage which the clergy enjoyed, of possessing a more perfect system of jurisprudence than was known in the lay courts, all concurred to extend the limits of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. By observing the wisdom and equity of the decisions in the spiritual courts, men began to perceive the necessity of deserting the martial tribunals of the barons, and of recurring to the former, till the latter were amended. Even through the darkness of that period, men were able to see how absurd were the judicial proceedings of a feudal sovereign, by which force and chance were made arbiters of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood; and by which the error or iniquity of a sentence was left irremediable, being subject to the review of no superior court †. Over such a rival, the ecclesiastical law gained an easy triumph. The people could not hesitate to whom they should have recourse for advice, and to whom they should look up for decision, in any intricate or important concern. When the end of a judicial court was not at all, or but imperfectly fulfilled by the ill-digested regulations of illiterate princes, who can wonder if the community turned from them with disgust, to the more rational institutes of ecclesiastical law?

To account for this general partiality of the public in favour of the courts and legal determinations of churchmen, it is unnecessary to impute to

† It is surprising that Dr. Robertson, who pourtrays in these disgusting colours his picture of feudal law, and who contrasts with it the superior excellence of the canon-law, could not account for the universal prevalence of the latter during the dark ages, without the chimerical fiction of a plot, in which all churchmen, with the Pope at their head, conspired against the State.

to the latter either extraordinary ambition or policy. The history of the manners and civil society which prevailed in that age throughout Europe, will best explain this phenomenon. Let us then, instead of inveighing against the encroachments of ambitious churchmen, rather lament the calamity of the times when princes knew only how to command armies, ignorant of the science of legislation and government, and scarcely acquainted with the first principles of political union *. I am sensible this opinion will appear very different from that which † many have maintained on the subject; yet I feel myself strongly confirmed in it by the support of two writers of the first eminence, ‡ who observe that the aggrandisement of the church arose from the circumstances, not the religion of the times, and more from the efficacy of political causes than from the influence of religious opinions.

Lofty ideas and arbitrary doctrines of Roman Catholics on the subject of government.

The greater part of the charges against Roman Catholics, reviewed in these pages, is such that men of every persuasion must necessarily plead guilty to them. The ambition of Romish clergymen, the intolerance of Popish princes, and the general disloyalty of Papists, have long been the hackneyed themes of Protestant declamation and invective. Less partiality, and more candour, would teach the dupes of such vulgar prejudices, that all men are ambitious, all princes have been intolerant, and that all religionists have been disloyal. Little surely is gained by proving that men of all religions

* "The independent jurisdiction of the Latin clergy was the fruit of time, accident, and of their own industry," says Mr. Gibbon, c. xx.

† Alde Raynal, Doctor Robertson, and Judge Blackstone.

‡ Hume's History, Vol. I. p. 330. Gibbon, Vol. VI. p. 110.

ligions are subject to human passions and infirmities; and narrow is the temper of that mind which, from such infirmities, presumes to argue against the nature and tendency of any particular religion.

I confess then that many Catholic divines have entertained lofty ideas, and have delivered arbitrary doctrines, on the subject of government: so also have the divines of the Church of England, and of other reformed Churches. That Papists have maintained sometimes slavish, and at other times extravagantly popular and seditious tenets concerning the relative duties of kings and subjects, wants no proof in a land where every tale of Popish unprincipledness is eagerly listened to, and fondly believed. But then is it the Papist only who has felt the goad of ambition? has he alone thrown down the fences of liberty? or has he only betrayed a rude contempt of lawful authority?—They were not Catholics who flattered the two first of the Stuarts by exaggerated details of kingly power, who shed the blood of Sidney and of Russel, and who canonized the degrading doctrines of passive obedience and non-resistance. Nor were they Catholics, who, in the last century, subverted the constitution of England; who, impatient of the restraints of law, indulged a spirit of wild and uncontrolled licentiousness. Nor do I recollect that Catholics, in whatever age they first became known, assailed the thrones of Princes, under the pretence of pious zeal, or that they propagated their creed by war and bloodshed. A revolution, or a *reformation*, in religion, enforced by tumult and rebellion, is not without precedent: but that precedent will not be found in the history of the origin of Popery.

It is strange that, in this liberal age and country, the dominion of religious prejudice should be

be so strong as to make us attribute those effects to the religion of Papists, which, when others are concerned, we more kindly attribute to the violence of their passions. When we hear of Protestant subjects who have dethroned their sovereigns, or of Protestant Princes who have enslaved their people, we are diligently cautioned not to infer that tyranny or rebellion is encouraged by the tenets of Protestantism, but that such crimes arise from that weakness and depravity which are common to Catholics no less than to Protestants. This, it must be owned, is a very satisfactory plea. But why is the poor Papist excluded from the advantage of it? Has he no trials to encounter, no weaknesses to surmount? Are Papists alone such exact observers of moral duty, as never to disregard the admonitions of their religion? Must the religion of the latter be answerable for every folly and every crime, while that of Protestants may be exculpated by alleging the well-known perversity of mankind?—It is hard to say on this occasion, whether the injustice or the inconsistency be more remarkable.

But what are the lofty ideas of Roman Catholics on the subject of government?—They are the long-exploded opinions of *some* Catholic schoolmen and canonists; the subordination of the civil to the spiritual jurisdiction; the deposing power of the Pope, and consequently the open avowal of an authority independent of, and superior to, the magistrate. It is true these opinions were formerly maintained by some individuals, never by the whole body of Roman Catholics. We can trace their rise and progress, and at last their decline. They were never considered as terms of Catholic communion; and, though supported by great numbers, were rejected by many, whose orthodoxy is unimpeached. Modern writers, I know, among the Reformed,
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have exerted all their ingenuity and eloquence to persuade us that the above-mentioned opinions were as universally subscribed by all Catholics from the eleventh century to the Reformation, as the dogmas of transubstantiation or Papal supremacy. Of such writers, the views are too interested and suspicious to obtain an immediate, unreserved assent. It is easy to discover the reasons by which Protestants are led to place in the most contemptible light, the state of learning and religion in Europe, in the ages prior to the sixteenth century. In proportion as they exaggerate the ignorance, the immorality and superstition of the Western world under a Popish establishment, they fondly hope to excite the gratitude of mankind for the blessings of science, morality, and religion, diffused by the Reformation.

But let it not be imagined, whatever were the benefits derived from the Reformation, that the people of Europe wanted its propitious light to discern the principles of an equal well-constituted government. Europe had been long acquainted with the profession and practice of Popery, before it had occasion to complain of the ambition of its prelates, or the encroachments of Rome. During that period, the independence of sovereigns, and the submission of churchmen to their princes, were acknowledged and enforced. To what causes the church owed its subsequent aggrandisement, and its ministers their extensive immunities, has been explained above. That however in every age, from the eleventh to the sixteenth century, the rights of princes were avowed and defended, in opposition to Papal pretensions, appears to be evident from the following considerations.

A very respectable opposition was made to the deposing doctrine, from the first appearance of it

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under the pontificate of Gregory VII, till the last use made of it by Clement VIII, and that through the most triumphant period of papal domination. I assert this the more confidently, because it is what has been confessed by a learned Prelate of the Church of England, notwithstanding all the prepossession of the times in which he lived against Papists*. In all the disputes between Rome and the Empire, there were never wanting numerous friends to the latter, who reproached the Pontiffs with their usurped greatness, and who contrasted their eagerness "to rise to that bad "eminnence," with the unambitious conduct of their predecessors. In England, the grasping policy of Rome was frequently withstood, and might always have been withstood, had not our weak, impolitic princes often purchased the interest of the Pontif, by the sacrifice of their prerogative, and of the national independence†. Whoever is conversant in our history, must be sensible of the truth of this remark. The united evidence of parliamentary records and ancient histories, confirms it in the most satisfactory manner. In the history of France, not a few instances may be traced of the intrusive interferences of Popes in civil matters. This remark applies with equal truth to the history of Spain, and of the republic of

* Book I c. viii. of Bishop Puckeridge's *Defence of Barclay*. Also Fra Paolo, a name dear to Protestants, in his *Defence of Gerson*, London, 1607, fol 89, b. says of the Popes having deposed Princes: "It hath not been used before the year of grace "one thousand; and after it hath been put in practice by the "Bishops of Rome, due resistance hath always been made, when- "soever they abused their lawful power . . . the resistance which "Philip the Fair made to Boniface VIII, and Lewis XII. to Ju- "lius, like to that which this commonwealth [Venice] doth use "at this present, is well commended by Richeome [a Jesuit]."

† Mat. Paris ad an. 1246, relates a singular instance of this impolicy in Henry III.; and Cotton's *Abridgment*, 47 and 50, of Edward III, contains remarkable instances of a similar weakness even in that politic and magnanimous Prince.

of Venice : yet we are assured by an author, whose name and veracity are highly respected in England, that neither the Venetians, the French, nor Spaniards, have ever acknowledged the pretensions of the Roman Pontifs to temporal dominion *. We are not, therefore, authorised from particular acts of papal usurpation, exhibited in England or in other countries, to infer the acquiescence of those countries in the general doctrines on which such usurpations were founded. Most of the canonists, some schoolmen, and those of the clergy who were led by interested views to exalt the prerogative of Rome, contended for the temporal and deposing power of its bishops, but, by great numbers of civilians and scholastics, and by all princes with their nobles, that power was denied †. It could not then be considered as an essential article of the Popish creed. If the belief of the deposing doctrine be not an article of Roman Catholic faith, nor a necessary condition of communion with Papists, as it evidently is not, with what justice is their *religion* said to prescribe to all its professors a tenet so hostile to the sovereignty of kings, and the independence of nations ? The *faith* of Rome is widely different from the *policy* of Rome, from the fancies of her schoolmen, or the adulation of her canonists : these may be arraigned ; the former cannot. The Church of Rome is not more responsible for the courtly doctrines of Bellarmine and other dependents, than the Kirk of Scotland is for the fanaticism of John Knox, or

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* Histoire des Différens entre Paul V. & la République de Venise, par Fra Paolo, p. 46, 111, 127, 225. Dr. Bois, Dean of Canterbury, under James I. has these words in one of his sermons : " This intrusion on the things of Cæsar is thought unjust and uncouth even by the Sorbonne and parliament of Paris, in France, by the commonwealth of Venice, by the seminary Priests in England."—Sermon on the 23d Sunday after Trinity.

† Bishop Puckeridge, in the chapter above cited.

the Church of England for the extravagancies of those among her divines, who, in the last century, asserted the divine right of kings.

That the Bishop of Rome therefore is constituted, by divine appointment, Lord of the kings of the earth, is so far from being universally believed by Papists, that it is not even a commonly received opinion among them. When the name and authority of a Roman Pontif were viewed with far greater reverence than in the present age, then, in this country, and in their expiring moments, did Romish clergymen protest their readiness to repel any invasion, though undertaken by the Pope, against this kingdom. Pius V. excommunicated, and attempted to depose, Queen Elizabeth: yet, of one hundred and twenty-four priests who were executed in her reign, not one denied, and few there were who did not openly confess, the legality of her title to the crown*; so ineffectual, at that time, were papal bulls to withdraw Catholic subjects from their allegiance, and to transfer it to a Pope. To confirm the truth of what is here advanced, it is surely unnecessary to observe, that the oath imposed on Papists by 18 Geo. III, which disavows all temporal power of Pius VI, has been cheerfully subscribed by every Catholic throughout this kingdom.

It is a favourite idea of many Protestant writers, that Popery and arbitrary power are inseparably connected together; that popery never fails to extinguish the spirit of liberty, and to rivet on its professors the chain of political, as well as
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* Memoirs of Missionary Priests, printed in 1741, collected from authentic records, manuscripts, relations of eye-witnesses, &c. — See the Preface and Introduction, p. 10. The editor of *Jenison's Narrative*, in Oates's Plot, printed in 1679, speaking of the popish secular clergy, p. 8, says, "They persuaded those here in England, of their own sect and profession, to quiet subjection, fealty, and allegiance, in the days of Queen Elizabeth."

of religious bondage. They who wish to propagate this unfounded opinion, do not reflect that the Roman Catholic was the religion of Europe, when the prerogative of sovereigns was the most limited, when the free constitution of our Saxon ancestors was in full vigour, and *Magna Charta* was wrested by Popish Barons from a dastardly tyrant. The cities of Italy, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, professed the religion of Rome, when they contended with the Empire for their liberties; and when, notwithstanding a powerful opposition, they at last obtained them. The States of Switzerland, during the two hundred years preceding the Reformation, enjoyed a freedom of government which Protestantism has not improved in those cantons wherein it has been since established. The Roman Catholic subjects of Philip II, in the Netherlands, were not less impatient of servitude, nor less active in resisting it, than the free spirits of Calvinism*. The late outcry of the French against arbitrary power has not been silenced, nor have their exertions in the cause of liberty been restrained, by the voice of Popery; and if the conduct of the French clergy, on this occasion, be compared with that of our churchmen at the Revolution, I believe the former will not be found to suffer by the comparison. If any credit therefore be given to the history of past ages, it will appear that Catholics are not less friends to liberty, and have not less distinguished themselves in that glorious cause, than the patriots of the Reformation. In the days of Popery, Tyler and Cade delivered, in rude and violent language, the same popular sentiments which have been since recommended by the smoother eloquence of Milton and Locke. However great might be the
darkness

* Recueil de plusieurs extraits tirés des traités, &c. fait sur la copie à Munster,

darkness that overspread Europe, yet men were not to wait for the dawn of Protestantism, to teach them the rights of subjects, the lawfulness of resistance, and the value of a free government. These points were not indeed so deeply investigated, nor so ably supported, as they have been since that period: yet, before the Reformation, Papists enjoyed common sense; and this was sufficient to teach them that all power originates from the people; that it is a trust committed to the magistrate for the benefit of the community, and, when perverted to its detriment, may be revoked by it, and modified anew. Of these principles, our Catholic ancestors might know without much reasoning, and feel the truth, though they were unable to illustrate them with the perspicuity and force of modern composition *.

When we take a comprehensive view of both the religion and policy of Roman Catholic States; when we find the former as silent as the thirty-nine articles are on the subject of civil government; and when we see Catholics, like Protestant subjects, live, some under a limited, others under an absolute constitution; we do not easily conceive upon what grounds their religion has been judged more friendly to slavery, than that of Protestants. They who are loudest in the cry against Popery and arbitrary power, are silent as to the proofs by which an accusation so odious ought to be supported. But the arguments of controvertists, it should be remembered,

* "To whom do we owe *Magna Charta*, but to our Popish Barons, long before the Reformation? And were there not as many and as frequent struggles in those Catholic times as since?" — Lord Lansdown's speech on the bill against occasional conformity, 1719. The same testimony appears in the speech of Mr. Lechmere, one of the managers against Dr. Sacheverel, and is admitted by Sir Simon Harcourt, in his reply to the managers. — See *Dr. Sacheverel's Trial*, p. 34, 185.

ed, are often less apt to afford conviction, than to instil prejudice into the mind; not so much calculated to satisfy the reason of the philosopher, as to inflame the passions of the vulgar. He who would appreciate the arguments of Protestant polemics against Popery, would probably find those to be most frequently urged, of which the whole force consists in calling Roman Catholics idolaters, slaves, and, above all, *Papists*. The application of this last term of reproach, is singularly useful to conciliate belief to the most monstrous absurdity, or the most absurd calumny. Let a man be called a Papist, and no evidence will be required to convict him of bigotry, superstition, or idolatry. This devoted and execrated name implies all these, and indeed every other quality that can excite the pity, or provoke the scorn, of a Protestant. While the idea of a Papist is such with the multitude, little learning or ingenuity is requisite to substantiate any charge against him, however improbable or chimerical. That mind which can digest the belief of Popish idolatry and faithlessness to heretics, will swallow eagerly this article of Protestant orthodoxy, that "all Papists are slaves."

Yet were we to suppose, what is not true, that Roman Catholic canons, sermons, and universities, had sanctioned with their united suffrages the doctrine of unconditional submission, still I maintain it, Popery ought not to be thought more friendly to despotic government than the established religion of England. From all the above-mentioned authorities, it was proved to demonstration, on the trial of Dr. Sacheverel, by the Doctor's counsel, that absolute, unresisting submission, had been the doctrine of the Church of England*. Her sons may indeed fritter away
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* Sacheverel's Trial, sixth day.

by ingenious explanations, the tenets of ancient orthodoxy, and may piously attempt to extenuate the errors, or palliate the excesses, of a fond parent; but it is in vain, "while homilies and articles, while so many archbishops and bishops and the university, all assert the doctrine of non-resistance to the supreme power*." Protestantism, it seems, had been the religion of Englishmen above a century before it gave them that liberty which some writers, doubtless presuming on our ignorance or our credulity, would have us believe is exclusively the fair and genuine offspring of *Reformation*. Indeed we were so far from tasting more abundantly the sweets of liberty under our Protestant governors, that, were the historian called on to fix the period of English history the least propitious to freedom, he would most assuredly name the reigns immediately succeeding the Reformation. The despotism of our government under Elizabeth, is well known; and, under the milder sway of her royal brother, Edward, slavery in all its horrors was legally established throughout England, as the state to which all vagrants were to be reduced†.

Such are the instances, still on record, of the free genius of Protestantism. I am aware the *glorious Revolution* will be pointed to with triumph, as an atonement for all the attempts ever made by our Protestant kings against the rights of the people. While I wish not to lessen the importance, or undervalue the blessings, of that great event, I cannot help observing, that it was certainly caused by an abhorrence rather of Popery than of despotism; more by an apprehension for the establishment, than for the constitution; in short,

* Lord Haversham's speech on the first article of the impeachment of Dr. Sacheverel. Also Mrs. Macaulay's History of England, Let. I. p. 4.

† 1 Edward VI. c. 3.

short, that it was the effect of more bigotry than patriotism. The Revolution however was a most distinguished benefit to the people of England, although the motives by which they were led who conducted it, might have been more pure, more liberal, and consequently more honourable. The Revolution is commonly described to be a *miraculous deliverance of the nation from Popery and arbitrary power* †. But who will believe the Revolution was miraculous, who has learned that James, the sole support of Popery and arbitrary power, was deserted by his army and fleet, and that the whole force of both was at the disposal of his enemy?

Nec Deus interfit, nisi dignus vindice nodus.

That this kingdom was delivered by the *miraculous* revolution from Popery and arbitrary power, is true; but that Popery and arbitrary power are the same, or that they are inseparably united, notwithstanding the high authority that insinuates it, is a mistake. Yet this popular error, the reverend and right reverend preachers of anniversary sermons have not failed to promote with all the ardour of interested eloquence. These pious and venerable fathers of the church may possibly take scandal at a rash, unguarded assertion of Sir William Blackstone ‡, in his Commentaries, "that, by the Revolution, our constitution has only been regenerated, as it were, and re-established on the principles of our Popish Saxon ancestors." If there be any truth in this remark, a remark certainly not suggested by

* The Prince of Orange, in his *declaration*, insisted more forcibly on the danger of the Protestant religion than of the government. He well knew the effect of religious prejudices was greater than of political impressions. See Art. i.

† Proclamation of Lords and Commons, Febr. 13, 1688-9.

‡ Vol. IV. p. 420.

by the partiality of Sir William to Roman Catholics, it should seem that Popery and liberty are not less consistent, nor less compatible with each other, than Popery and arbitrary power.

There was a time when the prejudice of our countrymen was not indeed less violent, but entirely different, if not entirely contrary to that which at present operates against Roman Catholics. Whoever reads the English divines of the last century, will find them uniformly agreeing in these points: that Papists maintained the doctrine of resistance; that their schoolmen placed the origin of all power in the people; and that the Puritan writers against passive obedience, borrowed their arguments from Parsons and other Popish authors*. The association therefore of two ideas so little agreeing, as those of Popery and arbitrary power, would probably have never been made, if a regard to exact truth had been considered, rather than animosity against an obnoxious and proscribed sect. It is not however my design to contrast the bold and spirited positions of Roman Catholics with the meek, passive theology of English Protestants, or to exalt the religion of Rome above that of England. I believe Christianity in general to be the friend of Liberty; nor have any of its numerous and discordant creeds yet presumed to censure the honour paid universally to this beneficent deity. All that I wish to prove, for to persuade is another thing, is that Roman Catholics are, neither from principle nor inclination, more enamoured, or even more patient of arbitrary power, than Protestants.

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* This is evident from the *History of Passive Obedience from the Reformation*, 1689. See the Preface, and p. 29, 39, 55, 63, 124. Also the Archbishop of Spalatro de Repub. Ecclesiastica, L. vi. c. 2 n. xix. Dr. Holden, an eminent Catholic divine, and author of *Analysis Fidei*, warmly supports the original contract between the people and magistrate, "*post alios quamplurimos scriptores*," L. ii. c. 9.

It is true that many nations, whose religion is Roman Catholic, at this day groan under the yoke of despotism. But, from this circumstance, to infer that despotism is the effect of the Romish religion, is shameful bigotry. Prussia, Denmark, and Sweden, are not free governments; nor was England free till more than a century after the introduction of the Reformation. If, therefore, there be a necessary connexion between the policy and religion of States, what becomes of the credit of Protestantism, for ever extolled as the guardian of civil, no less than of religious liberty? Why was freedom not introduced into this country, together with the Reformation? at least, why was the severity of a Popish government not softened by the mildness of succeeding Protestantism, instead of being exasperated as it was, and inflamed to unmitigated despotism.

They who have observed the attachment of men, especially of Catholics, to their religion, and who have learned from the polemics of the last century, that Papists have asserted the lawfulness of resistance in practice, as well as theory, will, from these premises, confidently infer that Roman Catholics cannot be faithful subjects of a Protestant prince. Facts however afford a firmer ground for opinion than the most ingenious speculations. Men of refinement frequently imagine connexions in nature which are contradicted by facts; and this happens especially when these connexions are established on particular views of the objects thus connected. It is this narrow contracted view of Popery, while it is beheld through the fallacious medium of controversy, which leads the mind into a thousand false combinations and inferences. These, when appreciated by their conformity

*Disloyalty of
Catholic sub-
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Protestant go-
vernment.*

conformity with history and experience, are soon found to vanish "like the baseless fabric of a vision." To resolve therefore, in a satisfactory manner, this important question, whether Roman Catholics may be good subjects of a Protestant prince, the most obvious method is to enquire what has been the political conduct of the Roman Catholics of this country under their Protestant governors, from the time of the Reformation.

The only opposition which Henry found from his Catholic subjects, was that of the northern counties for the restoration of monasteries. Though it be allowed that the suppression of these houses was productive of general advantage to the State; yet, in consequence of that measure, great temporary evil, and much partial inconvenience, were felt by individuals throughout the nation*. The hospitality of these communities was so extensive, and the relief derived from them to the indigent so liberal, that, to many, these appear to have operated as a discouragement of public industry. The country enjoyed, from a neighbouring convent, all the benefit of an opulent family residing on its estate, and letting its lands to the tenant at a rent extremely reasonable. The nobility and gentry, by whose ancestors many of the houses had been founded, possessed some considerable privileges, and also emoluments, arising from these establishments. The suppression of monasteries must have affected in a certain degree the immediate and actual interests of all orders of men, and could not fail to excite among them a general dissatisfaction. By it, some of the insurgents were reduced to demand from government a home, others a subsistence,†

* Hume, Vol. IV. p. 326, 7.

† According to Dr. Heylin, History of the Reformation, p. 261. 2, ten thousand persons were reduced to distress, by the final dissolution in 1538, and the following year.

of which they had been deprived; while others conceived themselves authorised to claim for their families the rights of their ancestors, which they saw wantonly violated by the undistinguished seizure of monastic property. They did not erect the standard of revolt against Henry for his rupture with Rome, or for his pretensions to the supremacy†, but for having unjustly sacrificed their property, their interests, in short, their civil and legal rights, to the avarice and rapacity of his courtiers. This was the real cause of the Northern insurrection‡; in which, it must be owned, the complaints of the sufferers were such as justified their clamorous importunity for a speedy redress. It is true, their attempt to procure that redress was not conformable to the established forms of law: but reason and humanity will always make a wide distinction between the turbulence of an ambitious rebel, and the resentment of an incensed, because injured, people.

In the reign of Edward, it is notorious that the disturbances raised in the West were owing more to civil than religious grievances. Mr. Hume has investigated them with his wonted acuteness, in his history*, and detailed them at some length. Religion on that, as well as on other occasions, was made subservient to policy, and was employed to inflame the discontents of the multitude. When the insurgents were in considerable force, and sanguine in their expectations of success, they added, to the list of their other grievances, the suppression of ancient rites; yet their complaints were originally pointed against inclosures and against oppressions from the

† From Speed, p. 1016, it appears that the insurgents in Lincolnshire acknowledged Henry's supremacy.

‡ Ib. p. 1018, Speed calls religion the *pretence* of the Northern insurrection.

* Vol. IV. p. 327, 8, History of England.

the gentry. The restoration of Popery was not the cause nor the object of that insurrection.

Whoever casts an eye on the Statute-book, will readily perceive that the severest laws against Papists were enacted in the reign of Elizabeth; and, from this circumstance, will be led to conclude that the behaviour of Papists, under that reign, must have been highly criminal to have exasperated the government to such unusual violence. Let us then examine what was the conduct of the body of Roman Catholics, under the administration of Elizabeth. Notwithstanding their power and numbers, both of which were formidable, they employed neither to disturb the succession of that Princess to the throne of England. The Popish bishops complimented her on her accession to the royal dignity; the nobility and people of that persuasion submitted peaceably to her rule, and paid every mark of allegiance which could be expected from the most faithful and affectionate subjects. It may be said, this obedient submission was only yielded during the short interval which passed between the succession of the Queen and the establishment of Protestantism; that is, before she avowed her partiality to the Reformed. This however is not true. The obedience of Papists to the government of a Protestant Princess, continued at least ten years unquestioned and unsuspected. I add, that it continued forty-four years; that is, during the long-extended period of Elizabeth's reign, without being once interrupted by the clamours of the Popish clergy, or once violated by the disloyalty of the Catholic body. I shall not shrink from the most minute inquiry into the conduct of Catholics, either in the rebellion of the North, the innumerable plots attributed to them by the credulity or malignity of Protestant historians, or in the conspiracy of Babington. In none of these misde-

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means was the body either of Catholic laity or clergy concerned. The individuals who acted in these scenes were discovered and punished. On them, all the guilt of conspiracy and rebellion ought to have rested. By what new code, then, of justice, was it extended at that time to the whole race, as it has since been transmitted to the descendants of that race of Catholics?

Relatively to the Northern rebellion, though the two noble leaders in it were indeed Roman Catholics, yet it does not appear that they acted in concert with the body of English Catholics; that they were either encouraged or assisted by them, or countenanced by their clergy. The truth is, that the remote as well as immediate causes of that insurrection were unconnected with religion: they may be seen in our historians. On that occasion the Catholics expressed an unfeigned affection for the Queen: they sent to her the letters addressed to them by the rebels, and offered to employ both their lives and fortunes in her service*. The bull of excommunication and deposition issued by Pius V. against Elizabeth, produced no alteration in the behaviour of her Catholic subjects. They still continued to yield the tribute of civil allegiance to her government: and very many, both priests and laymen, acknowledged openly the justice of her title, while they were suffering from the cruelty of her laws for denying her spiritual supremacy. They therefore who have attributed the Northern rebellion to the impotent denunciations of Pius's bull, have betrayed equal ignorance of history and chronology; for, in fact, the Papal bull was not made public in England till after the rebellion of Lord Northumberland. This Nobleman and Lord Westmorland published a manifesto. In it
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* Echard's History of England, Vol. II. p. 339.

no notice was taken of Pius's bull; on the contrary, the Queen's title was admitted, which in the bull was denied. I conceive myself therefore authorised to assert, that the intemperate zeal of Pius caused no abatement in the loyalty of Roman Catholics. The individuals of that communion began to think more freely and more justly concerning the independence of temporal princes.

If either inclination or sense of duty had prompted the English Catholics to obey the Papal mandate, and to renounce their allegiance to their Sovereign, doubtless these dispositions would have appeared in the year 1588, when, by a powerful diversion, they might have distressed Elizabeth, and perplexed the counsels of her ministers. But the impartial testimony of Protestant historians has done justice to Catholics on this occasion, and has affirmed that not one of that persuasion discovered any symptom of eagerness to join the enemies of his country. Surely the supposed attachment of Papists to Rome, and their disaffection to heretical governors, would have been shown at a time when they were not only invited by opportunity, but encouraged by the prospect of avenging the cruelty of a bloody persecution.

It was generally believed, throughout the reign of Elizabeth, that the establishment of English seminaries on the continent, was made with a view to instil into the minds of the Catholic youth, violent prejudices against the government of England, against the person of the Queen and her ministers, as well as against the religion of their country*. The prevalence however of this opinion was not confined to that reign; it has

* Letter of Sir Francis Walsingham, in Cabala, p. 372. Preamble to 27 Eliz. Queen's proclamation, 1591.

has continued to operate to the disadvantage of Catholics, particularly clergymen, through a period of two hundred years. Hence that horror with which our laws view the character of a *Papist priest*; hence the severity with which they arm the magistrate against him; and hence the sanguinary statute of 27 Eliz. That, of Catholics, the gentry and clergy receive their education in foreign countries, is not so much the effect of choice, as of necessity. The first of Elizabeth imposes the oath of supremacy on all graduates in the two universities; it also deprives of both real and personal estate, those who *teach or speak* in favour of the Papal supremacy. The fifth of Elizabeth subjects the delinquent to the additional sentence of a *præmunire*. The twenty-third of the same reign condemns to imprisonment for a year, any schoolmaster who teaches contrary to the act; that is, who teaches the spiritual supremacy of the Bishop of Rome. By these acts, aggravated farther by the rigour of royal proclamations, Catholics were disabled from giving education to their youth. Thus circumstanced, thus unable to educate his children at home, the poor oppressed Papist was necessitated to ask from foreign States, that moral and literary instruction for his offspring, which was denied by his own country. Was it to be expected that the parent would obey a statute which was an outrage on humanity, and which tended to draw upon his sons a contempt of their ignorance, as well as a detestation of their religious principles? Heroic ancestors of the present race of Catholics! I applaud that firmness, I admire that resolution, which forbade you to respect an ordinance that itself respected not the higher authority of God and Nature. From the time that the law against a foreign education in Popish seminaries was passed, till the present hour, when it still remains

an awful monument of the tyranny of princes and the servility of parliaments, Catholics have had the virtue to regard more the discharge of parental duties, than the terrors of legal injustice; and to brave, though at the risk of their fortunes, all the vengeance of iniquity sanctified and supported by law.

By a strange mixture of inhumanity and absurdity, Roman Catholics were driven from our universities; and, for repairing to others, were made obnoxious to the laws of their country. They who, for the purpose of education, entered into the schools established within the dominions of Philip, were viewed by Elizabeth with little less jealousy, or less terror, than the formidable *Armada* itself. Conformably to the dark, insidious policy of Cecil, plots were pretended to be contrived and discovered, in which the students were represented to have rushed from their seminaries, prepared, either by the dagger or by poison, to assassinate Elizabeth and her ministers. Indeed I can believe that these bore with indignant reluctance the violation of their rights, that they commiserated with just and generous feeling the misfortunes of the captive Queen of Scots, and that many of their teachers were intoxicated with the wild notions of Papal prerogative. But, that, in return for the protection afforded by Philip, the seminaries entertained views hostile to the peace and government of England; that they attempted themselves, or encouraged others, to destroy Elizabeth with her ministers; or that they countenanced either the invasion in 1588, or any other meditated by the Pope, or the King of Spain;—all this, though affirmed at that time by many of their enemies, and repeated with confidence by two late historians*, is a groundless and malignant

* *Hume*, Vol V. p. 283. *Mlle Keralio*, Vol. IV. p. 277, 8.

nant charge. They who are acquainted with the characters of Elizabeth and her servants, will be led to suspect the justice of that accusation, which rests only on the veracity of such witnesses. Yet it is not by such insinuations, nor by the uncertainty of mere negative arguments that the political innocence of the seminarists is supported: † Parsons, Allen, and Fitzherbert, who all lived in the very period of Elizabeth's reign, the most fruitful in conspiracies, have vindicated the honour of Catholic loyalty, and repelled with becoming spirit the calumnies of Cecil and his retainers. If the writings of the above-mentioned authors were unknown to certain late historians, the misfortune is that of the Catholics, and of truth: the public however should be informed, that the numerous conspiracies of Papists against Elizabeth, related by Protestant writers, and credited by Protestant readers, were denied and disavowed by the Catholics of those times; and that it is ungenerous to retail the convicted falsehoods of a bigoted chronicler*, as matters equally certain with the most authentic documents of history. In answer to the multiplied accounts of Popish plots against Elizabeth, I assert, excepting that of Babington, in which a few of the Catholic gentry were engaged, that not one is supported by such evidence as ought to appear satisfactory to an unprejudiced mind.

Those of Throcmorton, Parry, and Sommer-
ville, or Sommerfield, however confidently re-
lated

† *Responsio ad edictum Elizabethæ, per Andream Philopatrum*; that is, F. Parsons.—*Apologia pro Seminariorum alumniis*, by D. Allen, 1583.—*Fitzherbert's Defence of the Catholic Cause*, 1602; in which the reader will find a reply to all the general, as well as particular, aspersions of Roman Catholics on political grounds.

* Speed, without producing a single authority, has filled twelve folio pages of his Chronicle with a narrative of Popish plots. It is the common storehouse for information on this subject.

lated by Hume and Keralio, rest on very ambiguous and insufficient proofs. All the evidence of Throemorton's plot is wholly built on his own confession, a confession extorted by the rack, retracted at his arraignment, repeated again on the prospect of a pardon, and lastly denied at his execution. Dr. Robertson observes (indeed, who must not observe it ?) that the matter of Throemorton's confession appears extremely improbable*. In regard to Parry, it is doubtful whether he ever was a Roman Catholic. By the Catholic exiles in France, he was considered as an impostor, and as a man of no credit or principle. At his trial he retracted what he had before affirmed, concerning the Pope and Cardinals having hired him to become the assassin of Elizabeth. Camden and Echard insinuate, that the plot of which Sommerville was accused, was the invention of Lord Leicester, and was commonly believed to be such. The French Ambassador at the court of Elizabeth, in a letter, still extant, to Henry III. of France, mentions the imprisonment of Sommerville for a conspiracy against the Queen, and also the circumstance of his having procured from Rome a dispensation to murder Elizabeth †. He treats it as a fiction, devised for the purpose of inflaming the prejudices of the people against the Pope and English Papists. These three plots are recorded, with all their circumstances of intricacy, by Protestant writers, and with all the serious solemnity of the most authentic history. If those writers were acquainted with the facts above stated, facts attested by those who were living at the very time, it was uncandid, and even unjust, to suppress them. If
they

* History of Scotland, Vol. II. p. 112.

† The letter is among the *Pièces Justificatives* in M^{lle} Keralio's fifth volume of her *Histoire d'Elisabeth Reine d'Angleterre*, 1787.

they were ignorant of them, though their ignorance should be excused, yet the bold, unsuspecting confidence of their relation is reprehensible. Is it presumption to suppose that prejudice prevented them from discovering their usual sagacity and discernment, in favour of those whom they had been taught to execrate and condemn? Reports were circulated, and those reports have passed for incontestible, of three other attempts of Papists against the Queen, between the years 1592 and 1597. Besides the general observations made above, concerning the numerous conspiracies of Papists in the reign of Elizabeth, I have only this to say at present, that those attempts were constantly disavowed by the persons who were accused of having been engaged in them.

With respect to Babington's plot, and the Gunpowder Treason in the following reign, I acknowledge the facts. They were Catholics who, together with Babington, meditated the rescue of Queen Mary, and, if necessary to effect it, also the murder of Elizabeth. The conspirators were about fourteen in number. These were neither countenanced by other Catholics, nor connected with the body either of the clergy or laity, who remained wholly unconscious of Babington's treason. His associates sought, but without effect, to place some nobleman at the head of their confederacy. The clergy was so far from approving his treasonable attempt, that the annalist of Elizabeth's reign has recorded a letter from the obnoxious seminarists, in which they dissuade the Catholics from disturbing the peace of their country, and from employing force against the enemies of their religion. Mary's confinement was flagrantly unjust; and her misfortunes, during the long period of nineteen years, could not fail to excite the compassion of numerous friends.

These,

These, the sentiments of an imprudent generosity, added to the force of sympathy in religion, would naturally impel to liberate, if possible, the captive Queen, and to restore her to that liberty of which the violence of her adversaries had deprived her. It is therefore unnecessary to suppose that religion was the sole cause of Babington's conspiracy, or that this wicked attempt originated in a persuasion that it was lawful to assassinate Elizabeth for persecution of the faith*.

The still more atrocious design of a few Papists against King James and his parliament, though annually commemorated in detestation of Popery, cannot, without outraging reason and equity, be considered as an instance of the disloyalty of Catholics, and of their aversion to the government of a Protestant prince. First, Because, among the thirteen or fourteen conspirators (which was the whole number), no names of the Catholic leaders have yet been found. The first Marquis, Earl, Viscount, and Baron, besides several other noblemen, were then Roman Catholics. Of these, not one, and of the clergy not one, was proved to be an associate of that execrable combination. Of the general innocence of Catholics, with respect to the plot, James himself was thoroughly convinced: he avowed his sentiments in favour of them, in his speech to parliament, and in his proclamation. Secondly, Among the probable motives which have been assigned for that conspiracy, I recollect not to have found this—that the Papists were impatient under a Protestant government, but under a *rigorous persecution*, which they saw exercised with great severity at the accession of James. The Catholics betrayed no symptoms of disaffection to the administration of Elizabeth, in the course of several years after she

* “ La haine d’Elisabeth pour Marie Stuart étoit la seule cause
“ des conspirations qui menacèrent sa vie.”—Mlle Keralio, Vol.
V. p. 202.

she had declared herself a Protestant. The same observation will apply to the three first years of her successor.

All persecution is an invasion of the rights of conscience. Where rights are invaded, there will follow opposition. This, according to the power of resistance in sufferers, will be productive either of open hostility, or of the more silent arrangement of a plot. It is by these principles, which are founded on reason and experience, that we must account for the unnatural design of the conspirators against James and his parliament. Before the death of Elizabeth, it is certain that Prince, who was not without apprehensions about the succession, made very flattering promises to the Roman Catholics in England, to secure their interest in his favour. How must these have been surprised at James's proclamation, in the very first year of his reign, against the ministers of their religion! and how must they have been alarmed with the terrors of another oppressive and persecuting reign.

Whoever compares the conduct of Protestant and Catholic subjects to their respective sovereigns of a different religion, will, I am confident, entertain no unfavourable opinion of the fidelity of Roman Catholics. Irritated by penal statutes, they may have disturbed the government of Elizabeth and James: and have not Protestants disturbed that of Queen Mary of England, of the two Marys of Scotland, and of Charles I, when they were treated with far less severity than the Catholics were by Queen Elizabeth? I recollect no instance of Protestant loyalty comparable to that which Catholics displayed in service of Charles I. and II. Implacable and inexorable, then, must be the justice of that nation, which accepts not the fidelity of the whole body of Roman Catholics to the two Charles, as ample atonement

atonement for the demerits of a few individuals under Elizabeth and James.

Conclusion.

I shall here conclude the subject of this Inquiry. In its progress, I have examined the moral doctrines of Papists, have considered their influence on mankind, and have appreciated both the political and moral effects of their religious system. By many it will be thought that, to justify Roman Catholics, recourse has been too frequently had to the inconclusive argument of recrimination; the example of them who have done ill, being no exculpation of such as imitate them. I answer:—When we hear the Church of England extolled beyond all others, whether Papal or Reformed, when we hear its constitution made the subject of unceasing panegyric: to those who admit this transcendent excellency of our establishment, and yet condemn certain points in the Popish system, as immoral and pernicious, it is natural to reply, by observing that these points have not at all times appeared censurable or inadmissible to the orthodox, immaculate Church of England. Indeed her claim to these honourable epithets, may possibly be questioned by many, but all, I trust, will confess the injustice of Protestants persecuting in Roman Catholics such opinions as were once those of a Protestant established church. Lofty ideas of government, discouragement of free inquiry, with the doctrine of exclusive salvation, are among the heaviest charges that are laid to the account of Papists. Now, although the precedent of our national church, where these sentiments were once familiar, be not sufficient to confirm their truth, yet might it be expected to procure, at least in this nation, a toleration for those who now adopt, or rather, who now are said to adopt them.

To

To him who writes neither from interested nor ostentatious views, but solely from a desire of imparting that conviction to others which he feels in his own bosom, it is natural to look with some degree of anxiety towards the object which first induced him to address the public. Under this impression, when I weigh in my mind the effect of this inquiry, and the credit it will probably obtain with its readers, I own I feel no pleasing anticipation of success; no security of applause; no confidence of subduing inveterate prejudice, or of extinguishing religious animosity. Whatever be the glory of Englishmen, arising from their superiority in arts and arms, it is not heightened by the praise of superior liberality towards religious dissenters. While the Princes of Austria atone for the intolerance of their ancestors; while France, by adopting an enlarged and generous policy towards the Hugonots, redeems the bigotry of former ages; while Rome discourages, and Spain and Sicily have disarmed, the Inquisition; Great-Britain, when challenged to show her contribution to the common stock of tolerating merit—what has she to boast?—The act of 1778, by which one or two penal laws, out of many still remaining, were repealed; but in so ungraceful a manner, as proves that our countrymen are better acquainted with the theory than the practice of toleration. At this time, when Roman Catholics state their grievances, and supplicate a redress of them, they are answered by angry reproaches and bitter accusations. The detail of these has been considered in the course of these pages. And if, from this consideration of them, it appear that *the body of English Catholics*, neither at this day, nor in any former period, have maintained those principles which can alone justify the penalties enacted against them, why does a narrow, partial, and distrustful policy, still

still continue to restrain the liberality, and enervate the beneficence, of an enlightened nation?

When Roman Catholics have replied to the accusations of their adversaries, and have disavowed such principles as have been imputed to them in the heat or malice of controversy, they have been unfortunate enough not to be believed. This affected disbelief appeared particularly on a late occasion, when a Catholic clergyman had expressed himself more freely in a pamphlet*, on the subject of toleration, than many Protestants thought his profession would have allowed him. Among others, a learned Critic, who would have been more usefully employed in correcting ancient prejudices, than in propagating them, betrayed a marked unwillingness to admit the writer's sentiments as consistent with his religion. It were to be wished the Critic had formed his idea of Roman Catholics from their writings, rather than from the partial impressions of education, and the suspicious authority of controversy. Such insinuations of Catholics being disposed from principle to prevaricate, by professing what is only pretended, and denying what is really believed, by them, are highly ungenerous and unjust. They take from that persecuted and degraded people all power of reply; lay them at the mercy of their enemies, and render vain and ineffectual, all the eloquence and all the reason of the ablest apologists. The Inquisition, with all its iniquities, deigns to hear the accused. But even the benefit of a hearing, the least mark of judicial favour, is either peremptorily refused to Catholics, as was actually done for above a century†, or

* "The rights of Dissenters from the established Church, in relation principally to English Catholics." By the Rev. Joseph Berington, 1789.—Printed by the Publishers of this pamphlet.

† The necessity of employing a foreign press, was long the apology of Catholic Controversialists, for the incorrect edition of their works: yet free inquiry, we are told, is one of the blessings of Reformation.

or it is cruelly perverted, by fixing on them the odious imputation of wilful prevarication. This is effectually to realize the fabulous blindness of Justice, by rendering her blind, not to partiality, but to truth; and ill agrees, it must be owned, with the boasted character we so much affect—of a generous and magnanimous people.

To many, this Inquiry will appear rather a studied apology for Catholic doctrines, than an impartial review of their moral and civil tendency. I can only say, I designed not to be the eulogist of Papists. My object in writing these pages was precisely this, to discover whether the religion of Roman Catholics was such as to merit the odious distinction which attends it, the refusal of an equal toleration with other dissenters, in short, the severe penalties to which its professors, and particularly its ministers, are exposed. If the result of my Inquiry has been favourable to Catholics, let it not be ascribed to my partiality, but to their merit. The documents which I have consulted for information, have been carefully noticed; and, being more of Protestant than Popish extraction, will consequently be less suspicious, and less exceptionable to the Protestant reader. I have steered as clear of controversy as it was possible, not only because the subject itself is unfashionable, but because it is not essentially connected with the purport of this Inquiry; which is, to compare the Popish doctrines, not with the code of revelation, but with the laws of nature and civil society: for, if no opposition to these be found in the Romish system, then may its followers claim the rights of men, the benefits of society, and the privileges of citizens.

or it is easily perverted, by fixing on them the
 obvious intention of willful perversion. This
 is especially to realize the fabulous character of
 justice, by rendering her blind, not to partiality,
 but to truth; and if aware, it must be aware
 with the honest character who is much less of
 a generous and magnanimous people.

To many, this inquiry will appear rather
 studied apology for Catholic dogmatism. It is an
 impartial review of their moral and political
 conduct. I can only say I do not intend to do the
 interest of things. My object is to win the
 prize was to show that to discover whether the
 religion of Roman Catholicism was as a moral
 the obvious distinction which stands in the
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 in their respective papers to which it applied.
 ions, and particularly its principles, are exposed.
 If the result of my inquiry has been favorable
 to Catholicism, let it not be attributed to my par-
 tiality, but to their merits. The documents which

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I have collected, and being more or less
 carefully recorded, and being more or less
 true in their origin, will contradict the
 false insinuations, and let the world see the
 Italian people. I have feared to trust to
 myself, as it was possible, but only because the
 subject was a religious one, and I could not
 let the subject be connected with the religious
 and moral, which is to connect the people
 of Rome with the cause of revelation and
 with the moral and political principles of
 the religion to which they are bound in their
 hearts. I have not the power to do more
 of more than to show the people, and the people
 of the world.

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